

No. 590

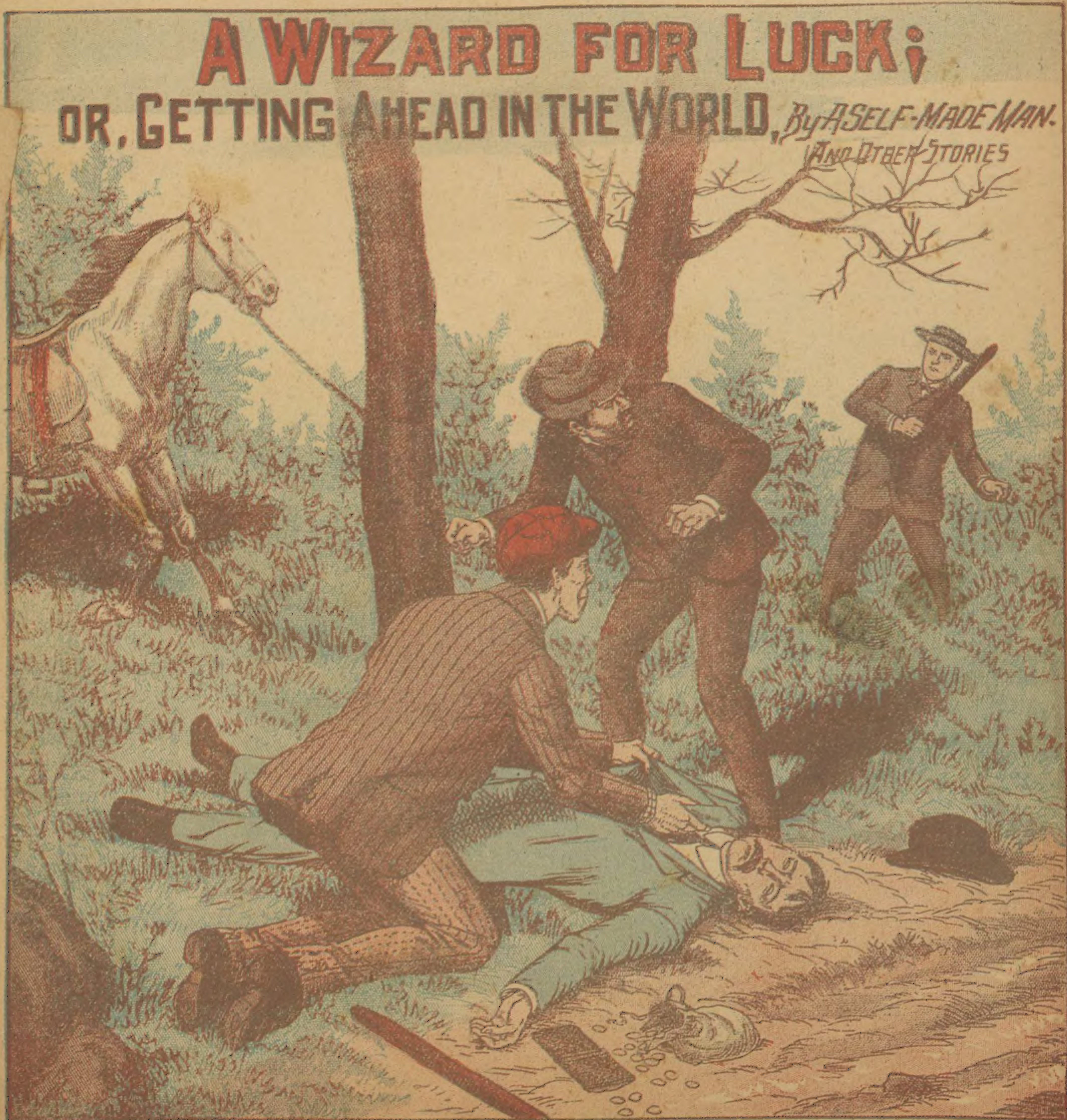
JANUARY 19, 1917

5 Cents.

# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF  
BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.

**A WIZARD FOR LUCK;**  
**OR, GETTING AHEAD IN THE WORLD,** *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*  
*AND OTHER STORIES*



"Hold on, there, you rascals!" shouted Fred, springing from the bushes, club in hand. "What in thunder are you doing? Robbing the man?" The two ruffians paused in their nefarious work and glanced at him in a startled way.







# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered at the New York, N. Y., Post Office as Second-Class Matter by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 168 West 23d Street, New York.

No. 590.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 19, 1917.

Price 5 Cents.

# A WIZARD FOR LUCK

—OR—

## GETTING AHEAD IN THE WORLD

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

### CHAPTER I.

#### FRED SPARKS UNDERTAKES A DESPERATE MISSION.

"Can you get this message through to Boston to-night?" Fred Sparks looked up from a game of solitaire he was playing to while away the time and saw a portly, well-dressed man, a stranger in the village of Edgecomb, standing outside the counter of his little den which bore the sign of the Western Union Telegraph Co.

"I'm afraid not, sir. The railroad bridge has been carried away by the breaking of a boom above the village, and the wires are down."

The gentleman looked both annoyed and worried by this news.

"Can't you send the message by way of Riverdale? That's on this side of the river and about fifteen miles below."

"No, sir. There is no wire from here to Riverdale. This is only a branch line and goes no further."

"It is a matter of great importance to me to get this message to Boston before the Stock Exchange opens to-morrow morning. Can you ride a horse?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll hire a horse from the stable and give you \$25 for yourself if you'll take the message down to Riverdale and have it sent from there."

"From what I've heard the road to Riverdale is so flooded that it is impassable. At any rate, the bridge across the Snake River branch is known to have been destroyed early this morning. It was only a light wooden affair, anyway."

"Couldn't you take a boat, row across the river here and send a message from some place on the other side? I'll make it worth your while."

The stranger pulled out a well-filled pocketbook and started to open it.

"The nearest office on the other side is at Greenville, six miles away. The river is so swift and high, not to speak of the logs one would be apt to meet, that any one would be risking his life to cross it in a boat," replied Fred.

"Look here, boy, can't I make it an object for you to run the risk. Here is \$100. Come across the street to the hotel. I will put the money in an envelope and place it in the hands of Mr. Murray, the landlord, with the understanding that if by any means you can send this dispatch to my partner in State Street, so that he will receive it before ten o'clock to-morrow morning, the money is yours."

The offer was a munificent one to Fred Sparks, who was only receiving a very small salary as the village operator.

More than that, \$100 was badly needed by his mother just then to meet a payment on the instalment mortgage which rested on the little farm owned by her, two miles outside of Edgecomb.

The temptation to make that money and thus relieve his mother's anxiety was irresistible.

Besides, Fred was a plucky boy, and dared attempt what many a man would refuse to undertake.

"I'll take your offer, sir, and do the best I can," he said, sweeping the pack of cards into the drawer of the table on which stood the telegraphic instrument which had been silent ever since the railroad bridge had been partly destroyed by the onslaught of the liberated giants of the forest after the boom gave way.

The gentleman handed him the telegram, and paid the tariff on it from Edgecomb to Boston, after Fred read it and counted the words.

It was addressed to a well-known stock broker in Boston, and related to the purchase of a certain stock.

Fred enclosed it in one of the Western Union envelopes and put it in his pocket, then he glanced at the clock.

It was just five.

Locking up the little office he accompanied the gentleman across the muddy street to the hotel.

Mr. Murray was behind the desk in the office.

The gentleman, whose name Fred now found out was Woodhull, told the landlord of the arrangement he had made with the young telegraph operator, enclosed the \$100 in an envelope and handed it to Mr. Murray to place in his safe.

"Here is a five-dollar bill, my lad, to pay for the boat, and to meet any other expense you may be put to," said the gentleman. "If you get across the river all right, bring back with you a paper signed by the operator Greenville showing the hour you turned my message over to him. That will be evidence sufficient to entitle you to the \$100."

Fred nodded and walked out of the hotel.

It was a late afternoon in March.

Rain had been falling steadily for three days, and from all parts of the State came reports of frightful damage by flood.

Trains were delayed on all the railroads by wash-outs; bridges were swept away; farms and villages inundated, and there had been disaster along the seacoast.

Snake River, which flowed by Edgecomb, was swollen to a tremendous volume.

Ordinarily rapid at this point, the water now swept by with great velocity.

Early in the afternoon a boom above the village, containing thousands of logs, gave way, so enormous was the pressure, and the liberated logs came down, like battering-rams, against the piers of the railroad bridge which spanned the stream.

The slender piers of masonry which supported the graceful steel structure could not resist the impetuous assault.

The two middle ones gave way, forming a broad channel, through which the water and logs poured in a wild torrent,



The telegraph wires over the river were carried away with the bridge, and for the time being Edgecomb was practically cut off from the outside world.

Fred Sparks was a new hand at the telegraph business, his appointment as the village operator dating back just one month.

Fred had been raised on a farm in the neighborhood.

He disliked the work quite as much as did other boys of his age, but love for his widowed mother made him ever faithful in the performance of his share of the labor of the small farm, in which he had long since lost faith as a means to fortune; for despite the industry of himself and his brother, John—and they did work hard—the farm only yielded the little family a poor living.

John, the elder brother, modest and unambitious, accepted this lot in life as inevitable, and patiently trudged along the rough way.

But Fred was cast in a different mold.

He was twice as smart as his brother and chock full of ambition to get ahead in the world.

He grew more and more weary of his plodding existence and longed for an opportunity to cut loose from the farm and seek his fortune in some other pasture.

His mother, however, could ill afford to lose his services, and so Fred hung on.

When the opportunity to learn telegraphing was thrown in his way he eagerly embraced it.

He rode to the village every night to take a lesson from the Edgecomb operator and practice on a spare sounder.

When his instructor, who had secured a better position, pronounced him capable of handling the business of the little office, his mother consented to his taking the job, for the money he would be able to turn in would more than pay the wages of a hired man to fill his place on the farm.

So the Western Union Co. hired him on the recommendation of the retiring operator.

The change suited Fred to the queen's taste, for he looked upon it as a stepping-stone to something better.

He had lots of time to himself, and he utilized the bulk of it in adding to the knowledge he had obtained at the district school, for, in his opinion, to be successful in any undertaking one must first possess an education.

## CHAPTER II.

### FRED MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF TWO STRANGE MEN.

Fred was strong and sturdy and perfectly at home in a boat on the river, but to cross that river under the present circumstances was an entirely different proposition to undertaking the same feat when ordinary conditions prevailed.

To reach Greenville in time to put the message through to Boston within the specified limit meant that he must dare the perils of a swollen current in the darkness and in the rain which had come on again.

Furthermore, he would have to make the trip alone, for he was satisfied that it would be useless to try and persuade any one in the village to accompany him across.

Such an attempt would be considered foolhardy.

Indeed, he was fully aware of the great risk he was facing, but that \$100 prize was before his eyes.

If he could win it he knew how happy it would make his mother, and for that mother's sake he was prepared to dare anything.

There was a rubber coat, an old slouch hat and a line-man's lantern in the office.

He donned the first two and, taking the lantern in his hand, started for the riverside to hunt up a serviceable boat.

He consumed half an hour in looking one up and obtaining the reluctant permission of the owner to use it for the sum of one dollar.

When he pushed out into the rapid water he could not see the outlines of the further shore.

The current was so strong that he did not attempt to row straight across, but allowed the boat to drift down stream.

He pulled sturdily at the oars for some time, and then cast frequent glances over his shoulder in expectation of seeing the opposite shore loom up before him.

A little below the village the river widened and at this point, now that both banks were more or less overflowed, the distance across was fully three-quarters of a mile.

As the moments passed and the opposite bank failed to appear, he began to grow somewhat alarmed.

The rain was now descending in torrents, and he occasionally shipped water.

Although he had managed thus far to keep the boat right side up, his situation was becoming more uncomfortable all the time, to say the least.

Suddenly a bend in the river brought a light into full view.

It evidently came from some house on the bank he was aiming for.

He hailed its appearance with a thrill of joy.

Heading the boat for a point about it to allow for the force of the current, he rapidly approached it.

At last, completely tired out by his violent and unusual exertions, Fred managed to effect a landing and tie his boat to a tree.

Satisfied that he must be at least a mile below the ruined railroad bridge, and feeling loath to start upon his dreary walk to Greenville across a soggy country, in his wet and exhausted condition, he decided to apply at the house for temporary shelter, hoping he might find a fire before which to warm himself.

Accordingly, he stepped up to the door of the building, which was but a small, one-story and attic frame affair, and rapped loudly.

Almost instantly the light went out, but no one answered his summons.

He waited a few minutes and knocked again, louder than before.

Still no one came to let him in.

"I guess they don't want to receive callers," he muttered. "It's pretty tough on me if I have to continue on in this shape. I may not strike another house for some time."

Finally he knocked a third time, determined to gain admission if he could if only for a short spell.

He was on the point of giving the thing up for a bad job when one of the two small windows was cautiously opened and a rough voice inquired who was there.

"I'm a boy from the other side of the river. I've just rowed across. I've got a long walk before me in the rain and I'd like to come inside and rest a while before going on."

"It's a kid," said the voice to some one behind him. "Says he's just rowed across the river and wants to get under cover for a while. Shall we let him in?"

Fred couldn't catch what the other person said in reply, but the man at the window closed it and presently the door was opened and he was told to walk inside.

The room was quite dark, and he could barely see the outlines of the individual who had admitted him.

A match, however, was struck a few feet away, the light flamed up, and soon a lamp standing on a table diffused a cheerful glow around the only real room in the house.

Fred then got a good view of the two persons who appeared to be the occupants of the house.

They were hard-looking fellows, both of them, of about the average height and build.

One wore a soft felt hat and the other a rough cap.

Their garments were somewhat shabby and threadbare, and, on the whole, they looked pictures of hard luck.

Fred like their appearance so little that he was sorry they let him in.

"So yer jest came across the river, did yer, young feller?" said the chap who had admitted him, and whose name the boy afterward learned was Jobkins, while his companion's name was Rowley.

"Yes."

"Yer have got a good nerve," said Rowley. "It must have been a matter of importance that fetched yer across. Where did yer come from?"

"Edgecomb."

"Is that the village up the river?"

"Yes."

"What's yer name?"

"Fred Sparks."

"If yer tired why don't yer sit down?"

Fred availed himself of this permission, but he kept a wary eye on the two men, for he had his suspicions of them.

"Where are yer goin' on sich a night as this?"

"Greenville."

"Where is that?"

"About seven miles from here."

"Is it on the railroad?"

"Yes."

"What sort of place is it?"

"It's a large village."

"S'pose we was to foller this river down, what's the next place we'd come to?"

"Glendale"



"How far is that from here?"

"About fifteen miles. It's opposite the town of River-mouth."

"What did yer do with the boat yer come across in?"

"Tied it to a tree outside."

"Expect to go back in it, I s'pose?" said Rowley, with a kind of grin.

"Yes. It belongs to a man in Edgecomb."

"Yer borrowed it, then?"

"I did."

While Fred and the man named Rowley were talking, the other chap was cooking some bacon and eggs on the small stove in a pan that looked very much the worse for wear.

He used the blade of a six-inch knife to turn the food.

When the stuff was done to a turn he took a small bundle from a shelf and disclosed a loaf of bread.

With the same knife he cut off three slices and on each placed an egg and some of the bacon.

Then he cut three more slices of bread and placed them over the eggs and bacon.

He handed one of the sandwiches to his associate, a second to Fred, who, being quite hungry, did not refuse it, and took a third himself.

There were only two boxes in the room, which served as seats, and one of these was held down by Fred.

Rowley occupied the other.

All three ate the simple meal in silence, and when the last morsel had vanished down their throats the men drew flasks from their pockets and washed the food down with a liquor that looked and smelt like whisky.

"Have a drink?" asked Rowley, proffering his flask to Fred.

"I don't drink any kind of spirits," replied the young telegraph operator.

"I reckon it's a bad habit," grinned Rowley, taking another swallow. "Say, what brought yer across the river on sich a night?"

"An errand," replied Fred.

"What kind of an errand?" persisted Rowley.

Fred was not anxious to disclose his business, but the question was too direct for him to evade, so he said:

"I came across to send a telegraphic message from Greenville to Boston."

"Oh, yer did. Ain't there no telegraph office in yer village?"

"There is, but the wires went down with the bridge."

"How much money have yer got about yer?"

"What do you want to know for?" asked Fred, rather startled by this inquiry.

"Well, me and my pal is strapped, and we'd like to borrow it from yer."

"I need whatever money I have. It isn't much, anyway. Still, I'm willing to let you have a dollar for the sandwich and privilege of resting here."

"How much more'n a dollar have yer?"

"Not a great deal more," replied Fred, evasively.

"Well, yer might turn out what yer have on the table. Yer won't need it to-night, 'cause ye're goin' to stay here till mornin'."

"Stay here till morning!" exclaimed Fred. "Oh, no; I've got to hurry on to Greenville right away, because that message must be sent to Boston as soon as possible."

"Sorry to interfere with yer arrangements, but yer've got to stay. We ain't pertic'lar about havin' no visitors afore mornin', which we might have if we let yer go."

"Do you mean to say you intend to detain me against my will?" said Fred, rising.

"I reckon that's what I mean," replied Rowley, coolly.

"You've no right to do that. And I won't stand for it, either," replied Fred, in a resolute tone.

"How are yer goin' to help yerself? We're the bosses of this ranch. We can't afford to let yer go."

"What did you let me in for?" demanded the boy, indignantly.

"To see if yer had any coin in yer clothes. Dump out what yer got, and in the mornin' yer kin go yer way."

Fred's answer was to make a sudden spring for the door.

Jobkins, however, was hovering in that direction, and so Fred didn't get a yard before the rascal seized him with a firm grip and pushed him up to the table.

"Yer didn't git very far, did yer?" chuckled Rowley. "Since yer won't cough up willin'ly I'll have to help yer do it."

Thus speaking, he thrust one of his hands into the right pocket of Fred's trousers and fetched up four one-dollar bills.

This was the change Fred had received from the man from whom he had hired the rowboat.

The young operator put up a game struggle to avoid being robbed, but the two men were odds against which he had no show.

"Now, Jobkins, hold him till I get a cord to tie his hands with," said Rowley.

As the rascal rose from his seat a sudden shock struck the house.

The building was lifted bodily from its slight foundation and swept over on an angle of fifteen or twenty degrees.

The table went over with a crash, carrying the lamp with it, the light being extinguished when it struck the floor.

Fred and his captors were thrown in a heap against the base-board of the further wall of the room.

The stove also participated in the general ruin.

It turned over on its side, scattering its blazing embers over the floor in the direction of the wall where Fred and the two rascals were floundering.

The building would have stood a fair show of catching afire but for an inrush of several inches of water which deluged the firebrands and thoroughly drenched the young operator and the two men.

Then the building righted with a wobbly motion, and went sailing down the river at the mercy of the swift current.

### CHAPTER III.

#### FRED IS TREATED TO AN UNCOMFORTABLE RIDE DOWN THE RIVER.

As Fred, somewhat dazed by the shock he had sustained, struggled on his feet, his head struck against the ladder leading to the attic or loft.

He grasped at it for support, and held on in the dark, wondering what had happened to the house.

His thoughts quickly grappled with the situation, and with a thrill of dismay he realized from the motion of the building that it was afloat on the river.

"My gracious!" he palpitated. "We'll all be drowned, like rats in a trap!"

It looked that way, for the water had risen to a good foot on the floor, and he could hear and feel it washing about the room with the swing of the house.

The water was cold and uncomfortable, and as the ladder offered a chance to get away from it, Fred took advantage of it and ran up to the loft.

The opening was fitted with a trap-door which he might easily have closed against the two rascals, but though he had no desire to enjoy their company further, he was not heartless enough to shut them down in the room, where they might, in that case, be drowned.

They were entitled to a chance for their lives as well as himself, however bad they might be, and to deprive them of that opportunity would be little short of murder.

So he left the trap open and groped around to see whether there was any opening by which, in case of emergency, he could get out and swim for his life.

At that moment he heard the two rascals scrambling up the ladder as fast as they could.

The rapid flooding of the room below had driven them to seek safety aloft.

No sooner were they in the loft than they slammed the trap down and stood upon it.

Then they heard Fred moving about.

"Are you up here, kid?" asked Rowley.

"I am," replied Fred, coldly, for he saw he would have stood small chance for his life had he been the last to ascend.

"Then open the trap in the roof so we kin all git out."

"Where is the trap?" asked the young operator, delighted to learn that there was an opening in the peaked roof.

"In the center, to one side."

Fred, following this hint, soon found the trap, which was held by a small bolt.

He released the bolt and threw open the flap, which worked outward on hinges.

Then he worked himself through the opening and straddled the middle of the roof.

Rowley and Jobkins did not immediately follow, but contented themselves with thrusting their heads and shoulders through the opening.

The rain had died away to a mere drizzle, but the wind



was blowing a stiff breeze that raised whitecaps on the turbulent surface of Snake River.

It was dark as pitch, and it was impossible to find out whether they were sailing along in the middle of the stream or close to the shore.

In any event, their position was one of great peril, but they were powerless to make it any better.

The house was now about half-submerged and rolled from side to side, like an old-fashioned Dutch lugger in a cross sea.

Occasionally when it made an extra dip to one side or the other, Fred, for the moment, thought it was going to turn over.

This, however, it couldn't do, owing to the quantity of water ballast it carried in the room below.

There was a little comfort in the reflection that, owing to its buoyant character, it could scarcely sink much below the level of the floor of the loft.

Apparently the three were in for an all-night ride if their odd craft did not go ashore or fetch up against some obstruction in their path.

As the minutes passed away, Fred saw the \$100 bill he had fondly hoped to capture slipping from his grasp.

It was too bad, after all the trouble and danger of crossing the river, to lose the price that surely would have been his if he had not stopped at that house.

Had he kept right on after landing he would by that time have been well on his way to Greenville, if not actually there.

The more he thought the matter over the more exasperating it appeared to him.

"Say, kid, how do you like it up there?" asked Rowley, who seemed to consider their chances of ultimate escape pretty good.

"Why don't you come up and see how you like it yourself?" asked Fred.

"This here place where we are is better," returned the rascal. "I reckon yer won't reach Greenville to-night to send that message yer were in sich a sweat about," he added, with a chuckle.

"That needn't worry you," retorted Fred, in a sour tone.

"It ain't worryin' me a bit. Mebbe yer kin send it from Glendale if we hit the shore. That'll save yer that long tramp of six miles through the mud yer were goin' to take only we stopped yer. Yer ought to thank us for providin' yer with a free ride down the river."

Fred made no reply, for at that moment he caught sight of several lights in the distance which pointed out the line of the shore on the Glendale side.

He was now able to see that they were some distance out on the stream, which reduced their chances of grounding near the bank very soon.

The speed with which they drew near to the lights showed how swiftly the current was bearing them down the river.

As they reached a point opposite the light a turn in the stream swung the house in toward the shore.

The house was caught by another current that set into a bite of the bank where hundreds of logs from above had jammed together into a kind of temporary boom that extended out a short distance, and was held in place by the diverse influences of the tide at this point.

Before the three voyagers suspected that an obstruction lay in their path, the house came, with a jolt, against the outer line of logs, and Fred, only by the greatest good luck in the world, saved himself from taking a header into the wobbling mass.

Rowley and Jobkine were unprepared for the shock, too, and they fell over themselves on the floor of the loft.

"Gee! I wonder what we've run against?" Fred asked himself, being unable to distinguish the nature of the obstructions in the darkness.

The house gradually swung around till its side rubbed against the logs, and as the action of the current bobbed the roof towards them Fred made out several of the logs lying stationary, and he began to understand that they had something to do with the stoppage of the building.

It was bad enough to be floating down the stream, but it was worse to be held up by a collection of partly submerged logs.

"Hello, kid! What have we run ag'in?" asked Rowley, who couldn't see the obstructions as the trap opening was on the side opposite the logs.

"Climb up here and see for yourself," was what Fred said.

Neither of the rascals cared to roost on the roof, so they didn't climb up.

The house was not fated to remain long in the embrace of the logs.

By degrees the action of the current worked it in toward shore and it finally grounded close to a big, overhanging tree.

As the leaves brushed in Fred's face he grabbed hold of one of the boughs and succeeded in swinging himself onto the bank.

The two rascals called after him as soon as they saw him vanish from the peaked roof, but he did not consider it necessary to make them any reply.

As soon as he felt the firm ground under him once more he started off briskly toward the nearest light.

It proved to be the dwelling of the foreman of a section gang on the railroad that ran to Glendale.

Fred knocked on the door and was admitted.

Here, before a fire which warmed his half-frozen frame, he told the story of his trip across the river and his adventures in connection with the building which had carried him down the river to that point.

He learned, to his great satisfaction, that Glendale was only about three miles away.

He told the railroad foreman the nature of the errand that had brought him across the river and how anxious he was to reach the nearest telegraph office as soon as possible.

"It is ten o'clock now," said the foreman, "and as the road is in a beastly state it would probably take you hours to walk to town in the dark. Better stay here. I'll give you a bed and will send you on to the yard on a hand-car around seven in the morning. That will give you plenty of time to send your message to Boston before ten o'clock."

Fred, with some reluctance, accepted the friendly invitation to stay at the man's home that night.

He was not sorry he had done so when, half an hour later, just as he was under the blankets, he heard the rain come down in bucketfuls once more.

He wondered if Rowley and Jobkins had succeeded in getting ashore from the house and, if they had, where they were at that moment.

Toward morning the weather cleared up and the stars were paling in the sky when the section foreman came into the room and awoke him.

He hurried on his clothes, and when he got downstairs found breakfast on the table, ready and waiting, for his host and himself.

It was just sunrise when Fred and the foreman left the house for the railroad track, nearly half a mile away.

About a quarter to seven a hand-car, loaded with section hands, came bowling down the line.

It stopped at the crossing where Fred and the foreman were standing.

After the men had alighted, the foreman instructed two of the hands to carry the boy to the yard, so Fred said good-by to the friendly railroader, mounted the hand-car and was soon being hurried toward the freight yard at Glendale.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### FRED SAVES MAJOR STRATTON FROM BEING ROBBED.

As soon as Fred was landed at Glendale he hurried to the nearest Western Union office and presented Mr. Woodhull's message for transmission.

He introduced himself to the operator as a brother telegrapher in charge of the company's office at Edgecomb village, and explained how he had rowed across the river early on the previous evening in order to carry the message, which was a very important one, to Greenville to be dispatched from that place.

He then went on to tell how he had stopped at the shanty on the edge of the river for temporary shelter; how he had been treated by the two rascals he met there, and how the building had been washed away by the sudden rising of the water and the three of them had been carried down the stream to a point three miles north of Glendale, where he succeeded in getting ashore.

As soon as he completed his story, which did not take him long to narrate, the operator forwarded the message to Boston and added the words, "Important—for immediate delivery," for the instruction of the general office.

Fred signed the dispatch as paid at Edgecomb, and received a signed statement from the operator giving the hour and minute when the message had been forwarded to Boston.

With that document in his pocket Fred bade the operator good-by and started to return to Edgecomb.



The nearest route back was by the river road, which offered pretty rocky walking that morning, but Fred was in high spirits, for the \$100 was as good as in his pocket.

However, the sun was shining bright and warm, and though the fifteen-mile walk to a point opposite the village might take him a good part of the day, he faced the job like a little man.

He entertained some slight hopes of recovering his boat which he had tied securely to a tree when he landed near the house, but if it was gone when he reached the spot he expected to get a boatman higher up to put him across.

If the boat he had borrowed was lost for good he would have to pay for it, but, on the whole, he felt that he could afford to do that under the circumstances.

With his waterproof coat under his arm he trudged sturdily forward, unmindful of the mud, and taking care to skirt the big puddles which glistened at frequent intervals along his way.

After covering nearly three miles, which brought him close to the vicinity where the house had grounded the night before, he climbed upon the roadside fence to take a rest.

In front of him, a short distance off, he could see the rushing river swelled to a considerable degree, and dotted here and there with floating logs.

Behind him was a thick hedge, with fields beyond.

Ahead of him the road branched slightly away from the stream.

Fred was thinking how surprised and pleased his mother would be when he handed her that \$100 which she needed so much, when he heard a cry for help in a man's voice from somewhere behind the hedge.

The cry was repeated, and mingled with it came the rough tones of two men.

Wondering who was in trouble and why, Fred sprang into the field, rushed to the edge and, parting the bushes, looked through.

In an opening on the other side two men were struggling with a third.

The man who was getting the worst of the encounter was well dressed and seemingly a gentleman.

His assailants the boy had no difficulty in recognizing as Rowley and Jobkins.

There could be but one object in their attack, and that was robbery.

Even as Fred looked they succeeded in tripping the gentleman up, and he fell heavily on the soft turf.

He lay still, however, after hitting the ground, for his head had struck upon a stone, and the shock had stunned him.

The rascals then proceeded to rifle his pockets without delay.

Fred saw them draw a bag of money from one pocket and a large wallet from another.

"I can't stand by and see that gentleman cleaned out without making an effort to assist him," breathed the boy. "And yet, what can I do against those two villains, one of whom I know has a knife, or at least he had it last night in the house?"

Fred, however, was too plucky to hold back simply because the odds were against him when he believed that it was his duty to do something.

He glanced around for something that might answer for a weapon.

At his feet he saw a heavy stick.

He grabbed it up at once and, thus armed, prepared for instant action.

"Hold on there, you rascals!" shouted Fred, springing from the bushes, club in hand. "What in thunder are you doing? Robbing the man?"

The two ruffians paused in their work and glanced at him in a startled way.

"It's the kid!" snarled Jobkins, who was on his knees beside the fallen man, and was in the act of taking a paper from one of his inner pockets.

Rowley, who had straightened up from a stooping position, glanced over his shoulder, with an ugly scowl on his by no means prepossessing countenance.

"Come now, drop that!" said Fred, advancing on the rascals.

Rowley turned around and faced him.

"Buttin' in, are yer?" he roared. "I reckon we'll learn yer a lesson yer won't like!"

He made a dash to seize Fred, but the boy swung his club too quick for him, landing a blow on his shoulder that staggered him.

Rowley uttered a string of imprecations and put his hand to his hip-pocket.

Suspecting the fellow was about to draw a revolver, Fred jumped at him and brought his stick down on Rowley's head with such good effect as to stretch him senseless on the ground.

Then he turned his attention to Jobkins.

That ruffian was paralyzed by the way the boy had handled his companion.

He pulled out his knife and jumped to his feet.

Fred gave him no time to use the weapon, but swung his club upward, catching the fellow a blow on his wrist that sent the knife hurtling through the air into the bushes.

Jobkins, furious with rage, tried to close on him.

The young operator, nimble as a monkey on his feet, avoided his onrush by springing aside.

Then, with a low sweeping swing of his club, he smashed the rascal in the shins.

Jobkins fell to the ground with a howl of pain and was unable to get up in a hurry.

Fred stood over him with his weapon and ordered him not to move on his peril.

The victim of the villains had by this time recovered his senses and was a witness of Jobkins' discomfiture.

"Well done, my lad!" he said, picking himself up. "You came just in time to save me from being robbed. You scoundrel!" he added, facing the rascal. "You and your companion shall pay dearly for your assault on me. You both have the look of jailbirds, and I'll see that you go back to prison, where you belong."

Jobkins glared up at him, but said nothing.

"Here, my lad," said the gentleman, "take my handkerchief and tie that rascal's hands behind his back. Give me your club, which I noticed you know how to use with good effect, and I'll see that he doesn't make any trouble for you."

The gentleman was clearly a man of resolution and action.

Had he not been taken at sudden disadvantage by the ruffians he would have made matters very hot for them before they could have succeeded in getting the better of him, if indeed they could have done so at all.

His manner helped to cow Jobkins, and Fred had no trouble in tying the fellow's hands behind him.

Then insensible Rowley was treated in the same way with the aid of his own bandana handkerchief.

When both jobs had been satisfactorily executed by the young operator the gentleman expressed his satisfaction.

"Now, my lad, what is your name and where do you live? I wish to know whom I am under such a great obligation to."

"My name is Fred Sparks, sir. I live on a small farm belonging to my mother about two miles outside of the village of Edgecomb, on the other side of the river."

"Ah, indeed!" replied the gentleman. "You are some distance from your home. Let me introduce myself. I am Major Payne Stratton, and I live in Glendale."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Major Stratton," said Fred, with some deference, for the major looked like a man of position and influence.

"You are a plucky boy, Sparks," said Major Stratton. "I don't know how you managed, all by yourself, to down both of these rascals, but there is no disputing the evidence of the fact. However, I recovered my senses in time to see the neat way you handled that ruffian yonder, and I am bound to say that no one could have done it better. The rascals collared me unawares and pulled me off my horse while I was looking at some of the damage done by the recent rains. It is my habit to take a ride around the country every pleasant morning. This morning I followed my usual custom in spite of the miserable condition of the roads. On this occasion I was combining business with pleasure, for I brought out a sum of money to loan a farmer acquaintance of mine, and but for your timely assistance I would have been robbed of it."

The major stooped and recovered his bag of money and pocketbook.

"Now, my boy," continued the gentleman, "it is only fair that I should testify my appreciation of your services by giving you some substantial recompense."

The major opened his wallet, which was well filled with bills.

"I'd rather not take any pay, sir," replied Fred. "You are welcome to what I did in your behalf. I considered it my duty to interfere to save you from being robbed and possibly injured by a pair of rascals whom I knew to be hard characters."



"But you must let me do something for you, my lad," insisted the major. "There are many ways I could probably be of assistance to you. Do you work on your mother's farm?"

"No, sir; not since the first of last month, when I took charge of the Edgecomb office of the Western Union Telegraph Co."

"Are you a telegraph operator?"

"Yes, sir, though I'm only a new hand at the business."

"What pay do you get?"

Fred told him.

"What prospects have you of advancement?"

The boy said that he wasn't very clear on that point, but that he supposed after he had been a year or so in the company's employ he would get a better position with more pay.

"At any rate, that's what I'm looking for," concluded Fred.

"How would you like to get a better position and more pay right away?"

"That would suit me very well, sir," replied the boy, eagerly, "but I can hardly expect such good luck."

"You look smart, and I should judge that you're ambitious."

"Well, sir, I'd like to get ahead in the world as fast as I could, but I expect to do it through my own efforts entirely. I haven't any backer, and, on the whole, I don't know that I'd care to be boosted into such a thing as a soft snap. It doesn't do a fellow any real good in the long run."

The major nodded as if he appreciated the force of the boy's words.

"Nevertheless," he said, "it's a good thing to have a friend at court, as the saying is. A boy may have the ability to make his mark and yet lack the opportunity to show what's in him. It's half the battle, sometimes, to get an early opening in the right direction. I think your talents fit for a wider field than that offered a regular telegraph operator. How would you like to go into railroading?"

"Railroading, sir?"

"Yes. I can place you in the Eastern road, for I am one of the directors, and well acquainted with the chief officials of the line. There are three branches to the service—office, mechanical and road. Perhaps it would be well for you to get your start in the first. You would have to make up your mind to go to Boston, though, for the general offices of the company are there."

"I have no objection to go to Boston in order to benefit myself," replied Fred.

"And your mother?"

"My brother John has charge of the farm and my presence is not necessary as long as I can send a few dollars home every month."

"Very good. Do I understand that you will give up the Western Union, then?"

"I will to get something that offers a better future."

"Very well. I suppose you know that a good deal goes by favor in this world?"

"Yes, sir; I have heard so."

"I mention this because I have it in my power to favor you—and I intend to do it. You have done me a great service to-day, and I should not be satisfied unless I returned it in a way that would tend most to your ultimate advantage. In a few days I have to go to Boston. I will then see the general passenger agent of the road about placing you. In due time you will receive a letter to report on a certain day in Boston. You will do so promptly and, after that, I shall expect to hear a good report of you for, remember, I shall take an interest in your progress, and to that end will keep you in mind. Now, Sparks, we must see about getting these rascals to the Glendale jail. You don't mind keeping an eye on them, I suppose, until I can ride to town and send the police out here to take charge of them?"

"I'll watch them, sir, and see that they don't get away," replied Fred.

"Good-by, then, till I see you again. Here is my card with my address. If you come to Glendale do not fail to visit me. I'm generally at home in the afternoon unless I'm out of town."

"Good-by, sir. I'm much obliged for your offer to get me a better position than the one I now hold."

"Don't mention it. The obligation is all on my side."

With those words, Major Stratton mounted his horse and galloped off toward town, leaving Fred standing guard over the two ruffians.

## CHAPTER V.

### FRED LEAVES HIS HOME FOR BOSTON.

After the lapse of an hour, during which Rowley recovered his senses, and the two rascals made all sorts of threats against Fred for doing them up, three policemen arrived in a light wagon and took charge of the prisoners.

They were dumped into the wagon with little ceremony, and when the outfit had departed in the direction of Glendale, Fred started on again up the river road.

After a short walk he reached the indentation of the shore where the house had come to rest after its trip of ten miles down the stream.

He saw it aground to one side, not far from the tree that had furnished him his means of escape.

Further out he saw hundreds of logs jammed together and piled on one another against the shore.

The submerged house and the mass of logs gave one some idea of the damage which the flood had occasioned along the course of the Snake River.

After Fred had satisfied his curiosity he resumed his way again.

By noon he was nine miles from Glendale.

The sight of a small farmhouse in the near distance, with the smoke pouring from the kitchen chimney, reminded Fred that he was getting hungry once more, so he decided that, as he still had some distance to go, he would try to get a meal at the place.

He was now able to pay for the favor, as he had recovered his four dollars from the rascal Rowley.

Accordingly, he walked up the lane to the farmhouse and asked if he could be accommodated with a meal.

The farmer willingly acceded to Fred's request, but refused to accept any pay for same.

The boy told the story of his night's and morning's adventures at the dinner-table, and was looked on as quite a hero.

The farmer declared that he must have a cast-iron nerve to have dared the dangers of the river in the darkness and rain.

"Five hundred dollars wouldn't have induced me to attempt it," he said. "I consider that you took your life in your hands, and that you ought to be thankful to Providence that you got across alive."

Fred remained nearly an hour at the farmhouse and then resumed his journey.

He had gone about four miles when he came to the place where he landed in the boat the night before, and, to his great satisfaction, he saw the stout little craft tied to the tree just as he had left it.

The stream having overflowed the spot, Fred had to remove his shoes and stockings, roll up his trousers legs, and wade out a dozen feet or more before he could reach the boat.

"I guess I've got my work cut out for me to row up against the stream," the boy said to himself, as he looked out on the swiftly flowing river, "but it will have to be done, so the sooner I get down to work the better."

He decided to row across first.

He was carried down half a mile before he landed on the other side.

After taking a rest, he started to row up the river, keeping close in to the shore, where he found the current less swift.

He was obliged to stop several times to renew his wind, but about four o'clock the spire of the principal church in Edgecomb loomed up ahead, and he judged that he had not over a mile more to go.

At length he reached the little wharf where he had hired the boat.

The boatman was sitting at the door of his house, smoking, when Fred landed and fastened the boat.

"I had almost given you and the boat up as lost," he said, when Fred stepped up. "I didn't notice you coming across. Which way did you come?"

Fred told him that he had crossed two miles below and then rowed up on that side.

"Were you carried down as far as that last night?"

"I was. And then I was carried nearly ten miles further down afterward on a shanty."

"How is that?" asked the boatman, in some surprise.

Without going into particulars about the two rascals, Fred told him how he had stopped at the building to rest,



and that while he was there a sudden rise in the river had carried the house away, and that it finally went ashore three miles that side of Glendale.

"Where was the boat all that time?"

"Tied to a tree where I landed first."

"Did you have to walk all the way back to it?"

"Looks as if I did, for there's your boat safe and sound at your wharf."

"I didn't know but you might have got a lift on your way. It must have been tough walking in the condition the roads are now."

"You can gamble on it that it wasn't a picnic."

"Did you send your telegram off all right?"

"Sure thing. I sent it from Glendale."

"Then you had to walk to Glendale from the place where the house went ashore?"

"No. I put up all night at the home of a section foreman on the Eastern Railroad, and this morning he had me carried to town on a hand-car."

"Then you walked all the way from Glendale to the place where you tied the boat, eh?"

"I did."

"I don't wonder, then, that the trip took you nearly all day."

When Fred left the boatman's he went straight to the hotel and presented the paper he had received from the Western Union operator at Glendale, certifying to the fact that the despatch had been sent to Boston at a quarter of eight that morning.

Mr. Murray read it, accepted it as satisfactory evidence that Fred had fulfilled his contract, and handed him the envelope containing the \$100.

Fred then went to the office and returned the waterproof, the lantern and the old hat, after which he locked up, went to the stable, got his horse and rode home.

"Why, Fred!" exclaimed his mother, as soon as he appeared, "where were you last night that you did not come home?"

"On the other side of the river, mother," he answered, cheerfully.

"On the other side of the river!" she cried. "What took you there?"

"A rowboat, mother," he replied, laughingly. "Also the chance of winning \$100 by getting a despatch through to Boston in time after the wires went down."

"I don't understand you, Fred."

"Well, let me have my supper first, for I'm as hungry as a hunter, and then I'll tell you the whole story."

His brother John now came in and started to wash up.

"Why didn't you come home last night, Fred?" he asked.

"Mother was very anxious about you. I rode in to the village this morning and found your office locked up. Where were you?"

Fred gave him the same answer he had given his mother.

"I s'pose you went across before the bridge gave way and couldn't get back before to-day," said John.

"No. It was because the bridge went down carrying the wires with it that I went across."

"Is that so?" said his brother, in some astonishment.

"How did you get across?"

"Rowed across in a boat."

"When did you do it?"

"Last night, between five and six."

John looked at his brother as if he thought he had done the craziest kind of an act.

"Did you tell mother what you did?" he asked.

"I told her I had been across the river, that's all."

"What did you go across for? Don't you know that you were risking your life?"

"I went across to earn \$100, and I earned it," replied Fred.

"A hundred dollars!"

"That's what I said. Here is the money to prove it," and Fred took the envelope out of his pocket and showed his brother five \$20 bills.

John looked at the money with a stare that showed his general unfamiliarity with \$20 bills.

"Supper is ready," said Mrs. Sparks at that moment.

"Is that money yours?" asked John, as if such a fact was truly astonishing.

"It's mine," replied Fred, in a tone of satisfaction.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Give it to mother. She needs a hundred dollars badly just now."

Thus speaking, the young operator took his place at the table.

The meal was eaten in comparative silence.

"Now, mother, I'm going to tell my story," said Fred at length.

He began with the appearance of Mr. Woodhull in his office the preceding afternoon, and his offer of \$100 if he (Fred) could by any means get a message through to Boston for him before ten o'clock on the following morning.

"I took him up, mother, because I knew you needed \$100 the worst way," went on Fred. "I had only to manage to get across the river before morning and the money would be mine, so I decided to risk it, though it was a pretty hard and perilous feat."

Then he went on with his story, telling how he had managed after considerable difficulty to hire a boat; how he had set out on the turbulent river, and how he had finally arrived at the other shore two miles below.

He told how he had applied for shelter at the house on the bank; the reception he met with there; how the rising water had carried the house away, described the trip down the river, and how he had finally reached shore.

He narrated how he had spent the night at the section foreman's house, and had gone on to Glendale next morning, from which place he sent the message within the stipulated time.

Then followed his trip back up the river, in the course of which he described how he had saved Major Stratton from the two rascals, and how, in return for that service, the major had promised to get him started in the railroad business in Boston.

"Surely you don't mean to leave your position in Edgecomb and go way up to Boston?" cried his mother, who did not relish even the mere suggestion of such a thing.

"Why not, if I can better myself?" replied Fred.

"Oh, I couldn't let you go so far away as that among strangers, my son," she said, with an anxious ring in her voice.

"Yes, you could, mother. You wouldn't stand in my way for anything. Edgecomb is really no place for me, no more than the farm was. I mean to get ahead in the world, and the only way to do that is to get out and hustle where one can make the most of his opportunities. I believe I've made a good friend in Major Stratton. He's promised to give me a start in the right direction. Then it will be up to me to make good, and don't you worry but I'll do that. Now, mother, you've been worrying yourself about the lack of \$100 to make your next payment on the mortgage. Well, here is the money," and he tossed the five bills into her hands.

The little woman looked at the bills and then, with tears in her eyes, she rose and threw her arms around Fred's neck.

"To think that you risked your life to earn that money for me!" she cried, in quavering tones. "Had I known you were going to do such a thing I never would have allowed you to do it."

"Well, you didn't know, mother, and so the money has been honestly earned and it will pull you out of a hole. Let it go at that and say no more about it."

Next day a force of men were put to work rebuilding the ruined section of the bridge, and at the same time a number of Western Union linemen managed to reconnect the broken wires and thus re-establish the circuit in a temporary fashion.

At any rate, Fred's instrument began to show signs of life again, and he sent a number of delayed messages that he had on file.

Thus a matter of ten days passed away, and he was beginning to wonder whether the major hadn't forgotten all about him, when he received a letter bearing the imprint of the office of the General Superintendent of the Eastern Railroad.

Opening it, Fred found an exceedingly brief communication addressed to himself requesting him to report at the superintendent's office in Boston at his earliest convenience.

The result of that letter was that Fred resigned his job with the Western Union Company, and one day, about a week after its receipt, he left Edgecomb, en route for the "Hub."

## CHAPTER VI.

### FRED TAKES UP RAILROADING.

"I wish to see Mr. Lamport."

It was Fred Sparks who spoke, and the person he addressed was a young clerk in the employ of the Eastern Railroad, in their general offices in the city of Boston.



"Got an appointment?" asked the clerk, with a certain haughty air bred of constant contact with visitors whose business might or might not be of sufficient importance to warrant their names being carried into the sanctum of the great mogul whose private office was close by.

"Not exactly," replied Fred, "but I've got a letter which directs me to report here as soon as I could."

"Did you bring that letter with you?"

"I did."

"Let me have it and I will take it in to Mr. Lamport."

Fred produced the letter, the clerk took it, told him to take a seat, and then disappeared through a door which bore the two words, "General Superintendent."

In a few minutes he reappeared and beckoned Fred to follow him.

A moment later the boy found himself standing beside the superintendent's desk.

Mr. Lamport was one of the most important employees in the service of the Eastern Railroad Co., and his manner showed it.

"Sit down," he said, to Fred, scarcely glancing at the boy. "Your name is Sparks?"

"Yes, sir."

"You belong in Edgecomb?"

"On a farm two miles outside the village."

"Parents living?"

"My mother is."

"You have been recommended to me for office work—as a starter, till we find out what you're best fitted for—by the general passenger agent, Mr. Peabody. You are a telegraph operator, I understand?"

"Yes, sir. I had charge of the Western Union office at Edgecomb."

"Didn't like the business, I suppose. Want to change. I have been requested to put you to work. When can you begin?"

"At once."

The superintendent drew a card from a drawer, filled in some blanks on it with Fred's name and other particulars, and placed it in a shallow, oblong basket on his desk.

Then he pressed an electric button.

A small, neatly dressed boy answered the summons.

Mr. Lamport in the meantime had dashed a few brief sentences off on a desk-pad.

Tearing the sheet off he enclosed it in an envelope which he addressed, "Andrew Bulgin, Esq.," and handed it to the small youth, with these words:

"Take this young man to the Claim Department."

Then he turned to the desk and other business, while the small boy led Fred out into the corridor.

The general offices of the Eastern Railroad Company occupied the upper floors of the depot building, while the headquarters of the president and other officers were located in the heart of the city.

The boy led Fred down the corridor to the extreme end, where a door faced them bearing the words, "Claim Department."

Opening this door, Fred's conductor ushered him into a small reception-room, the first of the suite, where they found another small boy seated before a small table, reading a magazine.

The superintendent's messenger laid the envelope on the table and walked away.

The youth at the table took up the envelope, looked at Fred and then entered an adjoining room with it.

In a moment or two he returned and told Fred to go in.

Our hero did so and found himself in a large, well-furnished room and in the presence of the chief of the department, who was seated at a desk in the center of it.

Mr. Bulgin, who was a small, nervous-looking man, with eyeglasses, looked Fred over critically and then said:

"Write a good hand?"

"Yes, sir," replied Fred.

"Come with me."

He rose from his chair and led the way into an adjoining room fitted up with two desks, at the larger one of which was seated a sandy-haired, sharp-featured man of perhaps forty.

"Mr. Hallock," said Mr. Bulgin, "you are short-handed, I believe. Put this young man at work copying reports in our claim book. I dare say you will find him useful in any other way that you wish to employ him."

Mr. Hallock, assistant claim agent, nodded and then gave Fred a sharp glance as the chief returned to his own office.

"Name?" asked Hallock.

"Fred Sparks."

"Handwriting good?"

"Yes, sir."

"Specimen, please. You will find paper on yonder desk." Fred sat down at the desk and wrote a dozen sentences offhand, finishing off with his name and address.

He brought it over to Mr. Hallock.

The assistant agent glanced at the paper and seemed to be satisfied.

He pushed a button in his desk.

A nearby door opened and a clerk, with a pen behind his ear, entered the room.

"The copying of our claim reports are way behind, I think?" said Mr. Hallock.

"Very much so, sir. We are short-handed, as you know."

"I know. Take this young man. His name is Sparks. Give him the desk formerly used by Maltby, and show him what to do with the reports."

"Very well, sir. Come this way," to Fred.

The boy followed the young man into the next room, where a dozen clerks were busily employed over books and papers at as many desks.

He was shown to a desk in a corner by a window overlooking an alleyway.

There was a closet near by where he was directed to hang his hat and overcoat.

The clerk then got a record book—a big, thick volume it was, and a pile of legal documents.

Fred was told to copy the contents of the papers into the book, in their order.

"Bear in mind, Sparks," said the clerk, "that the copies must be an exact fac-simile of the originals. No words or punctuation marks omitted or transposed. No word, or mark inserted that does not appear in the legal copy. In a word, you cannot be too careful in transcribing these papers, as everything depends on their correctness. Understand?"

Fred said that he understood what was required of him and he was left to make a beginning.

The other clerks in the room looked at him curiously, mentally sizing their new associate up and wondering what sort of a chap he was.

The first inspection was, on the whole, favorable to Fred.

They liked his face and the way he carried himself.

They judged him to be a good fellow and were disposed to court his acquaintance.

Fred worked steadily away until noon, when the clerks began to drop work and go out for lunch.

There was an exit and entrance of the employees of this room on a side corridor leading to a stairway that connected with the alley.

As each clerk passed a certain desk he picked up a small, square slip of paper, stamped it on a time-clock, wrote his name on it and hung it on a file.

He repeated this performance when he came back within the hour allotted to him.

The clerk who had introduced Fred into the room and set him at work came up and, telling him he could go to lunch, explained the time-clock system.

Accordingly, when Fred put his hat and coat on he followed the routine and left his name on file.

He had noticed a clean, modest-appearing restaurant within a block of the depot when on his way that morning to the superintendent's office, so he went there for his noonday meal.

He dispatched his lunch inside of half an hour and left the restaurant with a toothpick between his teeth.

With thirty minutes yet at his disposal, he walked slowly back toward the depot.

The sidewalks were alive with pedestrians of both sexes, half of them probably on their way to some train.

There were also many vehicles passing in the street.

When Fred reached the street on which the depot faced he saw an elegant equipage drawn by a pair of mettlesome grays standing in front of the main entrance to the offices.

A handsomely dressed girl of sixteen or seventeen years was seated in the back seat, holding a red parasol to ward off the sunlight.

The coachman, who had been sitting as stiff as a ramrod on the elevated box seat, suddenly noticed that something had gotten out of gear with the harness, and descended from his perch to fix it.

At that moment a red auto came gliding down the street.

When it reached a point opposite the team the chauffeur let off a most unearthly "toot, toot!" from his horn to clear the way ahead.



The high-stepping grays took alarm at the sound and both suddenly sprang forward, knocking the coachman to one side in the dirt.

In another moment the horses and carriage were off down the street at a speed that scattered the people at the first crossing right and left in terror for their lives.

Fred was standing at the opposite corner when the team took fright.

He heard the shouts and saw the people fall back in some confusion.

Then he saw what was happening.

It was a runaway, pure and simple, and as the block below was congested with trucks and other vehicles waiting for their chance to get alongside the long freight platform, a smash-up, that was bound to wreck the stately equipage and probably kill the horses as well as the girl in the carriage, was imminent.

He saw that unless the team could be stopped within a comparatively short distance a catastrophe was certain.

The girl evidently realized her peril, too, for she dropped her parasol, stood up and seemed on the point of jumping out, which would probably have been a fatal move on her part.

Fred never thought quicker in his life.

On the spur of the moment, with the nerve for which he was noted at home, he decided that it was up to him to stop the runaway and save the girl.

He sprang into the middle of the street and waved his hat and arms at the approaching team.

The frantic horses paid no more attention to him than if he wasn't there.

They bore right down on him, like a whirlwind, and were upon him before he realized his own danger.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FRED MAKES A DARING RESCUE.

After all, self-preservation is the first law of nature.

Fred jumped back to save himself from being run down.

As the nearest horse brushed by him, one of his hands caught the check-rein, while the other instinctively seized the upper part of the girth.

In a fraction of a second the plucky boy was carried off his feet.

Shouts and cries from the sidewalk greeted his perilous predicament.

Everybody looked to see him fall under the legs of the frightened animals, to be crushed under the wheels of the carriage.

But Fred's lucky star saved him from such a fate, and his steel-like sinews, bred of years of farmwork, aided by his natural agility, did the rest.

Springing into the air he threw one leg across the horse's back and swung himself astride of the animal.

Tearing off his jacket, he threw it over the steed's eyes and pulled his head back.

The animal immediately lost headway and began to hold back, thereby clogging the movements of his mate.

The girl in the carriage gazed in a fascinated way at the boy who had come to her rescue.

Instinctively she felt that her safety lay in him.

As the team lost headway several men took courage to jump into the street and add their efforts to that of the brave boy.

Finally the horses were stopped within a short distance of a heavily loaded truck, and Fred sprang from his perch and resumed his jacket.

He was surrounded by an excited crowd of onlookers who vied with one another to express the admiration they felt for his intrepid performance.

He pushed his way back to the carriage and asked the girl if she wished to get out of the carriage.

"Yes, yes," she said, nervously; "please assist me."

She put her foot on the iron step and then sprang into his arms.

He led her over to the sidewalk with some difficulty, as the crowd by this time had grown into mob-like proportions.

"Shall I escort you back to the depot, miss?" he asked her, politely.

"If you will be so kind," she replied, tremulously, grasping his arm for support, for now that the peril had passed away the reaction made her weak and almost hysterical. "How brave you were to spring on the horse's back and stop the team! I am sure you saved my life."

"I am glad I was able to be of service to you, miss," re-

plied Fred, regarding the girl with a look of admiration, for she was uncommonly pretty. "You look faint. Shall I take you into the drug store to rest?"

"No, no; it isn't necessary. Take me back to the depot, where my father is."

"Certainly."

He took her by the arm and they made their way through the crowd to the street crossing, and so over to the block bordered by the depot.

A fine-looking gentleman came running up to them just as they reached the corner of the building.

"Father!" cried the girl, throwing herself into his arms and bursting into tears.

"My dear child!" he exclaimed, kissing her fondly. "Tell me that you're not hurt in any way. I saw what happened."

"No, father, I'm all right, but I'm—frightened!"

"Well, miss, I'll bid you good-by now," said Fred, feeling that his usefulness to her had come to an end.

"No, don't go," she said, recovering her self-possession a bit and catching him by the sleeve. "Father, this boy saved my life."

"Indeed! Then, young man, you have placed me under a debt of gratitude. Let me know your name and your address, for I shall want to see you again."

"Fred Sparks is my name, sir. My address is the Claim Department of the Eastern Railroad Co."

"The Eastern Railroad! Are you one of the clerks?"

"Yes, sir."

"Young man, you shall hear from me in a day or two at the outside. I am George Wentworth, the president of the road, and this is my daughter Edith. Be assured that I shall not forget the service you have rendered my child. You have thanked him, have you not, Edith?" he added to the girl.

"No, father, I was too confused and frightened. You will excuse me, won't you, Mr. Sparks?" she said, looking at Fred. "I am deeply grateful to you for saving my life, and shall never forget what I owe you."

"That's all right, Miss Wentworth. I am glad I was able to help you out."

"But you risked your life to save me. You might have been crushed by the horses and the carriage. You were very, very brave to do what you did. I saw it all. You were the only one who dared come to my aid."

She flashed a look of admiration at him that made his blood tingle.

"Well, I must get back to work, for I have already overstepped my time," said Fred.

"You will call at our house and see me, will you not?" she said, detaining him. "We live at No. — Commonwealth Avenue. Write it down for him, father."

"We shall be very happy to see you, young man," said Mr. Wentworth, writing his address on the back of a card and handing it to Fred. "Mrs. Wentworth will want to thank you, too. Call on us as soon as you can."

"I will try to do so," replied the young clerk.

He lifted his hat and walked away, followed by Edith's eyes.

His stamped ticket showed that he had been out an hour and a half.

"I was unable to return any sooner," he said to the clerk who looked after the tickets. "There was a runaway in the street and I stopped the team, that's why—"

"You stopped the team!" exclaimed the clerk.

"I did."

The clerk whistled and looked at him in a strange way.

"Was Miss Wentworth hurt?" he said, in some little excitement.

"Not a bit. You know, then, that—"

"It was the carriage of the president of the road—yes. I'm thinking you made a ten-strike. You're likely to be in the butter-tub after this."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Fred, puzzled at his remark.

"If you prevented a smash-up, which might have resulted in the death of Miss Wentworth, you'll be in line for the softest job in the building. I wish I was in your shoes, Sparks!"

"I'm not looking for a soft job, and wouldn't take it if it was offered to me," replied Fred, promptly.

"You—wouldn't—take a soft—job?" fairly gasped the astonished clerk. "Oh, come now, you're joking!"

"No, I'm not joking," answered Fred, walking over to his



desk and resuming his work of copying the legal papers into the record book.

Within a quarter of an hour every clerk in the room had learned what the new clerk had done while out at lunch, and he was the focus of admiring and envious glances from the rest of the force.

At five o'clock work was over for the day.

"I hear you saved the life of the daughter of the president of this road," said the head clerk of the room, the young man who had put him to work and whose name was Fuller.

"I won't deny it," replied Fred, modestly. "I did what I thought was right."

"Well, all I can say is that you've done a mighty big thing for yourself."

"In what way?"

"In what way? Why, by doing a favor for Miss Edith Wentworth you've made a good friend for yourself in her father. He won't forget you. I'll bet you won't remain long in this room doing routine work. You'll be advanced to some easy berth with big pay and short hours."

"Think so?" said Fred, with a smile.

"I'm sure of it."

"I wouldn't advise you to bet on it. I didn't seek a position on this road to be advanced before I deserved it. I expect to get ahead on my merits, not by luck."

Fuller regarded his words with some astonishment.

"Oh, come now, Sparks, you don't mean anything like that. Promotion here goes as much by favor as by anything else. You may be as smart as greased lightning, but it does not necessarily follow that you'll get on unless the powers that be take special notice of you. In no business is competition for advancement so keen as it is among the clerks of a big railroad company. Accident and pull count for as much and, very often, more than real merit. Who got you the job here?"

"Major Payne Stratton."

"The deuce you say! He's one of the directors. Are you a friend of his?"

"I am acquainted with him," replied Fred, evasively.

"With him and the president to call on, you ought to land on the top shelf."

"I hope to land there some day, but I don't intend to get there through either Mr. Stratton or the president of the road."

"You tell that so straight that one feels almost compelled to believe you."

"I never say what I don't mean," replied Fred.

"Upon my word, Sparks, you're an odd kind of chap. Why, there isn't a clerk in this room but would give his eye-teeth if he could exchange places with you after what you did this afternoon."

Fred laughed.

"Where do you hail from?"

"Edgecomb, Maine."

"What did you work at before you decided to tackle rail-roading?"

"I was an operator in the employ of the Western Union."

"Why didn't you ask for a job in the train despatcher's office or on the road?"

"I didn't ask for anything in particular. Major Stratton offered to place me in an office job and I accepted, so here I am."

"And you expect to stick here in spite of your pull?"

"I hope to stick until I can see my way clear to something better."

Fuller thought he saw a mental reservation in Fred's answer and, winking a large wink to himself, said good-night and the two parted at the corner.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FRED DEMONSTRATES THAT HE IS ALL TO THE GOOD.

The morning papers had an account of the gallant rescue of Edith Wentworth, daughter of the president of the Eastern Railroad Co., by Fred Sparks, a clerk in the Claim Department of the company; consequently, nearly every employee in the depot building, from the general superintendent down, knew about the occurrence by the time he reached the office.

There was naturally much speculation among the clerks in the different departments as to who the lucky employee was,

for, of course, they considered him uncommonly lucky because he had saved the life of the president's daughter.

The clerks in the Claim Department fell over one another in their eagerness to make his acquaintance next morning, and, much to their surprise, they did not find him puffed-up with a sense of his own suddenly acquired importance.

On the contrary, they found him a very modest and socially inclined young fellow, and all took an immediate liking to him.

Fred was preparing to go out to his lunch that day when a messenger summoned him to the office of the general superintendent.

"Sparks," said Mr. Lamport, when the boy appeared before his desk, "you appear to have specially distinguished yourself yesterday afternoon, judging from what I read in the morning papers. I did not call you here, however, to speak about that, but to tell you that the president has just asked me over the 'phone to send you up to his office in the Narragansett Building, so you had better go at once."

"Yes, sir; but I'm not very familiar with Boston yet, and I have no idea where the Narragansett Building is."

"It is on Tremont Street, near—but to make sure that you will not go astray I'll send my messenger with you."

The superintendent summoned his boy and told him to take Fred up to the office of the president of the road.

They boarded a car and before long entered the building where the executive offices of the company were located.

The superintendent's messenger left him in the general reception-room and hurried back to the depot.

President Wentworth was expecting Fred and shook hands with him when he took his seat beside that official's desk.

We will not record the conversation which took place between them, but will merely say that Mr. Wentworth once more expressed the gratitude he felt toward the boy for saving his daughter's life, and then said he would like to give Fred some substantial evidence of his appreciation.

"How long have you been in the employ of the company?" he asked.

Fred clearly surprised him when he answered, "One day."

The boy told him how he came to connect with the company, and how he expected to advance himself in time to a good position.

Fred plainly let it be known that he had no wish to be any one's favorite, but that he hoped to get ahead by his merits alone.

His attitude made a good impression on the president, and that gentleman assured him that he would see that his ability was fittingly recognized.

"I will keep myself informed of your progress, Sparks," he said, "and you will be promoted as fast as the service will permit and your abilities warrant."

Then, telling Fred not to fail to call at his home some evening soon, dismissed him and the boy returned to his desk in the Claim Department after getting his lunch.

The other clerks looked at him inquisitively as he sat down to his desk, and wondered if that was to be his last day in that department.

When, however, he turned up next morning as usual and the day after that, and so on, they began to wonder from a different point of view.

Fred learned the location of Commonwealth Avenue and the means of getting there from his boarding-house, and on Friday evening he called at Mr. Wentworth's home.

He asked for Miss Edith, and was shown into the parlor while his name was carried upstairs to that young lady.

She retreated to her room to get into one of her best gowns, and in the meanwhile Fred was invited to come upstairs, where he met Mr. Wentworth, and was by him introduced to his wife.

The lady of the house was very gracious to him, and thanked him for the priceless service he had rendered her daughter.

After a little while Edith appeared and welcomed him with unaffected warmth.

She laid herself out to entertain him, and her bright, vivacious ways completely fascinated him, so that when he bade her and her parents good-by he was desperately smitten with her.

She made him promise that he would call again soon, and he was only too glad to assure her that it would give him great pleasure to do so.

Fred worked steadily in the Claim Department for three months at a somewhat higher rate of salary than the position usually commanded for a beginner.

He did not know that the president had fixed his rate of



pay himself, and that he was receiving as much as a clerk who had been in the company's service for two years or more.

The office employees were paid on the first of each month, and on the following day Fred sent his mother a sum equivalent to the wages he had earned during the short time he had worked for the Western Union Company.

This was sufficient to stop the gap made by the loss of his services on the farm, and his mother gradually became reconciled to his absence from home.

During those three months Fred demonstrated the fact that he could work like a Trojan, and also that he was accurate and painstaking in everything he took hold of.

Fuller, the chief clerk, came to look upon him as an employee who could be thoroughly relied upon to pull out in any emergency.

Mr. Bulgin, the chief of the department, noticed that Mr. Lamport, the superintendent, seemed to take a whole lot of interest in Fred.

He wasn't aware, however, that this was occasioned by the periodical requests made to the superintendent by the president of the road for a report on the boy's progress and general efficiency.

Once during that time a similar request came from the general passenger agent, who was responsible for Fred's appointment.

That official made the inquiry in response to a letter from Major Stratton, who wanted to learn how his protege was getting on.

Altogether, quite unknown to the bright boy, powerful interests were overlooking him with a view to his early advancement in the service.

Everybody but himself seemed to take it for granted that he was slated for rapid promotion as soon as he had been broken into railroading.

Strange to say, this good luck did not give rise to any great amount of jealousy on the part of the other clerks, for Fred had established himself as a general favorite in the department.

He was modest and unassuming in his deportment toward his fellow-workers, and was always ready to help any one of his associates out at any time that his own work permitted him to do so.

Although his boarding-house life in a big city like Boston, which was new to him, brought him in contact with many temptations, he managed to steer clear of the acquisition of bad habits that would have seriously impaired his general usefulness.

He visited Edith Wentworth about twice a month, and had firmly established himself not only in the good graces of that young lady, but in the good opinion of her parents as well.

They learned all about his former life, for Fred had no secrets to conceal, and was very frank in telling everything about himself.

In this way Mr. Wentworth got a line on the bent of the boy's ambition, and he decided that it would be ultimately to Fred's advantage if he switched him off from routine office work and afforded him an opportunity to enlarge his scope of railroad knowledge.

Perhaps the president of the road had noticed the growing intimacy between Fred and his daughter, and thought it would be well to prevent it from going too far.

He was too grateful to the lad and appreciated his manly and independent way, as well as his evident ability to a degree that would not permit him to suggest a curtailment of his visits to the house.

But there are more ways than one of killing a cat, and Mr. Wentworth, whether his daughter was a factor in the case or not, decided that Fred would be more in his element in a road than an office position.

So as a first step to this change he requested the superintendent to transfer the boy, with a strong recommendation, to the freight department of the Boston yards.

The freight yards were about a block from the depot, and there one morning Fred was put to work checking outgoing and incoming freight, and attending to such other work as the agent saw fit to give him to do.

Here he remained for another three months and established as good a reputation for himself as he had done in the Claim Department.

He was getting on swimmingly at his new branch when one morning he was summoned to the office of the general superintendent.

## CHAPTER IX.

## FRED IS TRANSFERRED.

"Sparks," said Mr. Lamport, when Fred presented himself at his office in response to instructions, "you've been working at the freight sheds for the last three months."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, wondering what was coming.

"I have received very favorable reports of your work from the agent in charge, and as an opportunity offers for your advancement I have decided to push you ahead."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," replied Fred, with a thrill of pleasure.

Had the boy known the truth of the matter he would have found that his promotion had been brought about by the president of the road.

So early an advancement as he was about to get the benefit of was decidedly unusual in the routine of the road, but, then, he didn't know that.

Most of his fellow-clerks at the freight sheds had been anywhere from six to twelve times as long holding down their present jobs as he, and their chance of rising higher was not particularly brilliant at that moment.

He was to be passed over the heads of the whole force of ordinary clerks, and given a responsible position on the line.

"I am going to shift you down the road," said the superintendent.

"Down the road, sir!"

"To Cresson Junction. You will start in as assistant to Harlow, the agent. In thirty days we expect you to be competent to take charge of the station yourself."

Fred was staggered.

He was actually going to be made a station agent.

He was delighted beyond measure, and yet he hated to get away from Boston—Edith Wentworth.

There was no getting away from the fact that he was dead gone on the president's daughter, though there was little likelihood that that fact would do him any good.

He was a poor boy, dependent in his own exertions for a livelihood, while she was the only child of a rich and influential man.

The boon of her society for the past six months would henceforth be as a sweet dream to him, nothing more.

"This is more than I expected so soon, sir," he said to Mr. Lamport.

"You will not return to the freight sheds," said the superintendent. "You will need a few hours to get your traps in order to start."

"When do I go to Cresson?"

"On the Portsmouth Accommodation, No. 233, which pulls out of the station at six."

Fred thought his transfer a quick one.

He wondered if he would have a chance to call on Edith, tell her he was shifted out of Boston and wish her good-by.

The superintendent drew a map toward him, ran his finger along the main line of the Eastern road till it paused at a spot where a short branch line diverged from it.

"Here you are," he said. "Cresson Junction, 110 miles east of Boston. Harlow has been instructed to secure accommodations for you, and will be on the lookout for you to-night. Call at half-past two. I will have your orders written out and all other papers necessary. You can look them over on the train."

Fred went directly home, told his landlady that he had been suddenly ordered out of the city, squared his account with her to date and went to his room to pack his two grips.

He carried them with him to a restaurant, ate his dinner and rode down to the depot, where he left his property in the baggage-room to be called for.

It was now close to half-past two, so he repaired to the superintendent's office once more.

"Mr. Lamport has been called away," said the messenger. "Your name is Sparks, isn't it?"

"That's right."

"Come inside. There is an envelope for you on the superintendent's desk that he told me to give you when you came here."

It was addressed: "Frederick Sparks, Cresson Junction."

"Mr. Lamport told me to tell you that there is a pass to Cresson Junction in the envelope. He also said that your time at the freight sheds has been made up and that if you apply at the paymaster's office you will get your money."

"All right," replied Fred.

He hurried to the designated room on that floor, received



his wages to date and then, looking at the clock, calculated that he had time enough to pay Edith a brief visit.

As the car was passing up Washington Street he happened to glance out of the window and, to his surprise, saw Edith and her mother standing in front of a big retail dry goods store talking to a gentleman and lady.

He sprang from the car and hastened over to them.

"Why, Fred!" exclaimed Edith, when the boy touched her on the arm. "This is quite a surprise!"

She shook hands with him in a way that showed she was delighted to meet him, while her mother nodded and smiled.

Fred drew the girl a little aside.

"I was just going to your house to see you," he said.

"Indeed!" she replied, in surprise.

"I wanted to bid you good-by."

"Bid me good-by!" she ejaculated, in not a little astonishment. "What for?"

"I leave Boston at six to-night."

"At six! Are you going home for some reason?" she asked, with a serious look.

"No. I'm going to Cresson Junction."

"What for?"

"I've been shifted."

"Shifted!"

"Yes. The superintendent ordered me to report at that station to-night."

"Isn't that rather sudden?" she asked, with a look of concern.

"It is sudden. I only heard about the change at eleven to-day."

"And you expect to remain there for a while?" she asked, evidently not pleased at the idea of losing him.

"For some time, I guess. I'm to be the station agent there after thirty days."

"I'm sorry you're going to leave Boston," with a suspicious moisture in her eyes.

"I wouldn't mind it if it wasn't for——"

"For what?" she asked, as he stopped.

"Leaving you," he blurted out, with a look that she readily interpreted and which called a bright blush to her cheeks. "I've learned to think a whole lot of you, Edith," he went on, in a low tone. "I know I haven't any right to, but I—well, I can't help it. You've been very kind and nice to me—as nice as a sister, and I shall be lonesome and homesick away from you. I should like to think that you—well, what's the use of talking?" he said, huskily. "I don't amount to anything, while you—you're rich and have lots of friends and I am nothing to you."

She saw the moisture in his eyes, while his tones thrilled her and she laid her daintily gloved hand on his arm.

"Don't talk nonsense, Fred," she said, in a low, soft tone. "You are something to me. I don't want you to go, but if you must, I shall not forget you. I shall think of you every day and long for the time to come when I may see you again."

"Do you mean that, Edith?" he asked, eagerly.

"I do. You must write to me and I will answer your letters. You won't forget to do that?"

"Forget, Edith? Never! Never as long as I live. I only wish——"

"What do you wish?" she asked, looking at him with glistering eyes.

"Don't ask me, Edith. I have no right even to breathe the thought of such a thing. Your father and mother would be very angry if they thought I was so presumptuous as to dream of crossing the gulf that lies between us. At any rate, I never would be considered worthy of aspiring to what was beyond my reach."

"I think I understand you, Fred," she said, with a look that set his blood tingling in his veins. "Shall I give you a watchword? It is 'Hope.' There is nothing that may not be won by perseverance and a brave heart. You have both. Then why be discouraged at the outset? The gulf you speak about may be bridged and the object you seek gained."

"But you do not know the prize I would win."

"Perhaps I can guess," she replied, looking down.

"Oh, Edith, if I only dared hope that I had even the ghost of a chance!"

"Foolish boy! Can't you see that you have every——"

"Edith," interrupted her mother at this point, "you will have to excuse yourself to Mr. Sparks. We have scarcely time to make our purchases, for we are due at Mrs. Prescott's at five."

"Mother, Fred is going to leave Boston. He is wishing me good-by."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Wentworth, who already knew that the young railroader was slated for an out-of-town position. "When do you leave town?"

"At six to-night."

"Then I suppose I must say good-by to you. You will call on us, of course, whenever you return to the city."

"Certainly, Mrs. Wentworth. Good-by."

They shook hands and the lady turned toward the entrance of the store.

"Good-by, Edith!"

"Good-by, Fred! Remember the watchword—'Hope.'"

"Then I may hope—you promise me that?" eagerly.

"Yes, have I not said so? Good-by."

And so they parted, Fred taking a car back to the depot, and wondering if his chance of ultimately winning Edith Wentworth was within the bounds of probability.

## CHAPTER X.

### FRED ARRIVES AT CRESSON JUNCTION.

At quarter past nine that night the Portsmouth Local, No. 233, stopped at Cresson Junction and several passengers, including Fred Sparks, alighted on the long platform.

Fred walked into the waiting-room of the station, which was lighted by a large reflector lamp, in time to see a square-built man come out of the little office where the tickets were sold, and other clerical work connected with the station done.

The boy stopped and looked at him.

He guessed this might be Harlow, the station agent.

He was not wrong in his surmise.

Harlow looked at him and was prepared to recognize him as his new assistant, and the lad who was to relieve him at the end of thirty days.

"Are you Mrs. Harlow?" asked Fred.

"That's my name. You are Frederick Sparks, I guess?"

"Correct. Glad to know you, Mr. Harlow."

"Same here," answered the agent.

They shook hands.

"Come inside and we'll have a talk, then I'll take you over to your boarding-place. The lady who owns the house is a widow. You'll find her a nice person. I've known her ever since I came to the Junction."

They entered the little office, which Fred viewed with a certain sense of proprietorship, as he felt that he would be in full charge a month hence.

"You are young for a station agent," began Harlow, after they were seated. "How came you to catch on? Got a pull?"

His words struck Fred like an unpleasant blow.

It had never occurred to him until that moment that his promotion was due to anything other than his own ability and strict attention to business.

Now there flitted across his mind a vision in which Major Stratton and President Wentworth stood forth with great clearness.

He began to realize that one of these gentlemen, probably the latter, had been the lever that had moved him from Boston to Cresson, and shoved him up a notch.

To a boy like Fred this was not a palatable cud to chew.

Harlow's question was so direct that he had to answer it somehow, though it was embarrassing for him to admit that influence had anything to do with his transfer.

"I'm acquainted with the president of the road and also with one of the directors, but I never asked for nor desired their influence," he replied.

Harlow coughed incredulously.

He knew that advancement along the line went largely by favor.

Only a chump would refuse to avail himself of the influence of a friend at court, and certainly this boy didn't look like a chump, even in the most remote degree.

"How long have you been with the road?" he asked.

"Six months."

That settled any doubt he might have entertained concerning the boy's pull.

"I've been instructed to break you into the job," said Harlow. "I think it won't take me thirty days to do that, for you look as smart as chain lightning. You're an operator, of course? I need hardly ask you that, since it is essential to the job."

"I am."

"How did you learn? At a school?"

"No. I was taught by a Western Union man and took



his place with the company until I resigned to go rail-roading.

"I guess you're all right. Well, I'll soon show you the ropes. You won't find your regular duties hard, for there isn't much going over the branch at this time of the year. It's a sort of summer line in the main—goes to Lakeview and connects with the navigation company's steamers. It isn't the work—it's care that killed the cat."

"You refer to the responsibilities of the position, I suppose?"

"Yes; you'll find them unusual."

"In what way?"

"In several ways. You'll get on to some of them before I leave. Mooney is the worst."

"Who's Mooney?"

"He's the night operator. Goes on at six. He's away to-night. I don't know where he is."

"Oh! What's the matter with him?"

"He drinks."

"How does he hold his job?"

"Pull."

That word was hateful to Fred, and it prejudiced him against Mooney.

"Doesn't he attend to his business?"

"Yes—after a fashion. He isn't attending to it to-night."

"Is he drunk?"

"Probably. That isn't the worst, however, I suspect that he stands in with a bad crowd around here."

"What about this gang?"

"They're night-hawks. Always up to some kind of rascality. You must always keep your weather-eye lifting after dark; if you don't—"

"Well?"

"You'll regret it, that's all. I'm glad to get away from this joint. Another six months of it would turn my hair gray."

"Pleasant prospect for me," said Fred, squaring his jaws. Harlow observed the action.

"You'll get along, probably, for I can see you have grit."

"Well, haven't you?"

"I've none to spare. I can't stand continuous worry."

"I never worry—if I can help myself," replied Fred.

"It would take a cast-iron man not to worry here."

"Well, I suppose I'm up against it, but you can paste this in your hat—I mean to do my duty or break a leg."

As Harlow couldn't leave the station, he got the watchman to take Fred over to the place he had selected as a home for the boy while he remained at Cresson Junction.

Fred rather like the little widow who owned the house, while the room seemed to be satisfactory in every respect.

He appeared at the station next morning at seven ready to submit to the breaking-in process, and Harlow was on hand to give him an insight into the manifold duties of a station agent.

There was not such a great number of way-bills to be made out, nor tickets asked for during the day, as he had expected.

Still, there was a whole lot to attend to in one way or another.

After he had set all the lights up and down the track, which ended his duties for the day, Harlow told him that the day's work was a fair sample of what he might expect to have to handle at that season of the year.

"That so?" replied the boy. "Then I should say you've had a fairly easy time of it, take it all together."

"I never had a kick coming on account of the work, even in the summer, when things are a bit lively. No; it's what is liable to happen at night that's kept me awake for hours after I turned in."

"What's that got to do with you? It's up to Mooney, I should imagine."

"No, I'm the agent. If anything serious happened while Mooney was on I'd have to shoulder the responsibility."

While he was talking with Harlow, a short, chunky, smooth-faced man came into the station and walked into the office.

"That's Mooney," said the agent. "Come, I'll introduce you to him. You might as well make his acquaintance first as last."

So they followed the night operator inside.

"Mooney," said Harlow, "this is Fred Sparks, who takes charge here on the first of next month. Sparks, I'll make you acquainted with Phil Mooney."

Mooney sized Fred up to his own satisfaction at one glance and he grinned sardonically.

"So they're sendin' boys out now to run the stations. are

they?" he chuckled. "I wish ye luck, young feller, but I'm afear'd ye'll have yer hands full."

"I was telling him that things were rather strenuous around here at times," said Harlow.

"I s'pose ye told him I was a soak, too, eh?" replied the night operator, with an unpleasant chuckle.

"I did tell him that you crooked your elbow too often on occasions, which is the truth, unfortunately."

"It ain't your funeral!" snarled the operator.

"But it will cause yours one of these days."

"Huh! Forget it!"

Click! Click-click!

Mooney turned around and sat down before the table on which the station call—D. G. 13—was sounding, sharp, clear and distinct, on the little brass instrument.

Fred's ear translated the message as it came over the wire and Mooney wrote it out with a pencil on a pad.

It came from the next station on the Boston side, and was something to cause the three to sit up and take notice.

It ran as follows:

"An engine, running wild at a two-forty clip, just passed, bound east, on down track. You have barely time to switch runaway before Express No. 66 is due at Junction."

Fred easily understood the import of the message.

The runaway held possession of the track supposed to be clear for the Boston and Portland Express, which should pass Cresson Junction in six minutes.

Unless the wild engine was promptly switched onto the branch track, which at that hour was clear all the way to Lakeview, there would be trouble to burn.

Clearly, there was no time to be lost if a disaster was to be averted.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FRED AVERTS A HEAD-ON COLLISION.

Fred, after a glance at the clock, was the first to make a move.

He seized a lantern that stood on the floor, dashed out of the office and ran down the track with the switch-key in his hand.

It was a dark night and the sky was threatening rain.

To the eastward when the express was coming on at a high rate of speed the track lay straight as a die for a mile or more in the gloom.

In the opposite direction the track took a curve a quarter of a mile from the station and disappeared behind the trees.

The station was the only bright object in the landscape, but beyond it, some little distance away, were the straggling lights of Cresson.

Fred hustled to make the switch that would shunt the wild engine off the main track onto the branch.

With no means of making steam the runaway would then probably "die" before it got as far as Lakeview, which station would, of course, be notified of its coming.

There was a thick mass of shrubbery near the switch, and as Fred placed the lantern on the ground and stooped to unlock the lever, a man's face was thrust through the bushes.

The boy's face was thrown into relief by the light, and the man in the background saw it quite distinctly.

He uttered a low exclamation of surprise, which was followed by a deep imprecation.

He pushed his way through the shrubbery and, creeping toward the switch, suddenly threw himself upon Fred and bore him to the ground.

A pair of wiry fingers sought for the boy's throat, but Fred, though taken completely by surprise, was not easily subdued.

The thought flashed across his mind that he was up against one of the night prowlers mentioned by the station agent, and he was fully resolved that the rascal should not find him an easy mark.

A desperate struggle for the mastery immediately ensued. The knowledge that more even than his own safety depended on the outcome of the scrap nerved the boy to put forth his utmost efforts to win out.

By a quick movement he squirmed out of the man's clutch and rolled over on his back, the better to see what kind of antagonist he was facing.

The rascal, however, jumped on his chest and tried to hold him down.

Fred caught a look of his face, reflected in the light of the lantern, and gave a gasp of astonishment.



It was Rowley, one of the two men he had had trouble with along Snake River, near his home, and whom he supposed was safely lodged in State prison for attempted highway robbery, of which crime Major Stratton had nearly been the victim.

"Oh, it's you, you villain!" cried Fred.

"Yer recognize me, do yer?" hissed Rowley, pausing in his efforts and glaring down at the boy.

"Yes, I know you."

"Yer'll know me better when I'm done with yer. I owe yer somethin' for gettin' me pinched, and helpin' to send me up, and I always pay my debts!"

"You only got what was coming to you."

"Did I git it?" chuckled the rascal.

"I'm afraid not. A screw must have worked loose somewhere. You got ten years, and here it isn't ten months and you're free."

"Jest so. So ye're workin' for the railroad, are yer? Yer won't work long, I'm thinkin'. I'll fix yer so ye'll lay up in the hospital for a while, drat yer!"

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," replied Fred.

He made a sudden shift of his body, exerting all his strength at the same time.

He threw Rowley over so that they lay side by side with their heads touching the side of the rail.

The villain struggled hard to regain the mastery, but Fred's muscles of steel held him down, though he could not get on top himself.

"Blast yer!" gritted Rowley. "I'll git the best of yer yet!"

"You only think you will. I'm not a chicken."

After another ineffectual struggle, both stopped, with one accord, to regain their breath.

Then it was that Fred's alert ears caught the first faint vibrations telegraphed along the rail of the approaching runaway engine from the west.

He was facing in that direction, too, and presently the headlight of the locomotive came into sight around the curve, a mile away.

The sight of that glaring white eye cutting its way through the darkness awoke the boy to the realization that everything depended on the issue of the next few seconds.

The switch was unlocked, and all he had to do was to pull the lever.

But he must reach it first, and to accomplish the job he must shake off Rowley in an effectual way.

As he gripped the rascal for a fresh effort, Rowley seemed to understand his purpose, for his fingers got busy, too.

While they struggled fiercely in each other's embrace the wild engine was rushing down on them at a lively gait.

The glare of the headlight was now upon them.

In a moment or two the runaway would have passed the switch.

At that tense moment the boy heard the long-drawn-out whistle of the express up the track as it passed Bailey's Crossing, three-quarters of a mile distant.

It was approaching like a whirl-wind, and no power on earth could avert a head-on collision with the runaway if the latter got by the switch.

With a cry of desperate earnestness, Fred put forth every inch of power he possessed.

He fairly rose into a sitting position with Rowley at arm's length in his grasp.

Then, with a sudden swing, he threw the man down.

Rowley's head hit the rail with a thud that jarred every bit of consciousness out of him.

The boy struggled on his feet, weak and dizzy from the tension he had been through.

The runaway engine was right on top of him almost, with rapidly moving drivers, coming out of the darkness like some mysterious phantom of the night, its eye glaring ahead like an ogre's.

The sudden wild screech of "down brakes" came thrillingly through the air from up the track.

The engineer of the express had seen the approaching headlight dead ahead on the same track and knew something was wrong, for no train should be coming in that direction on the north track.

As he had been assured of a clear track to Berwick by the signals displayed at Tower No. 16, two miles back, he had supposed, when he first caught sight of the headlight, that it came from the locomotive of the night freight drawn up on the long siding at the Junction.

The air-brakes were instantly applied, but with a momentum of nearly a mile a minute to overcome, there was little chance of stoppage that side of Cresson.

As Fred sprang forward, seized the lever of the switch and pulled it over, he saw the headlight of the express dangerously near.

A second or two later the runaway engine dashed up and then glided off on to the branch with a rumble and a quiver of its big driving-wheels.

Until it had passed Fred's heart was in his mouth, then he pushed the lever over and locked it, with a thrill of thanksgiving at his heart.

The crisis past, his strength gave way all at once, and he collapsed beside the switch.

The engineer of the express saw the switch-light turn from white to a blood red, denoting a blocked track, as Fred pulled the lever over, and his blood ran cold, for he knew his train could not be halted before reaching the switch.

Then he saw the glowing headlight before him suddenly disappear and the switch-light return to a white, or clear track, and, with a cry of relief, he whistled "off brakes" and threw off the reverse lever.

So, as Fred half-crouched, half-lay, beside the switch, the ponderous express train flew past in safety with a rush and roar and soon vanished around the curve on its way to Boston.

## CHAPTER XII.

### FRED FINDS HIMSELF UP AGAINST MOONEY.

While Fred reclined half exhausted beside the switch, Rowley recovered his senses, staggered to his feet, and looked around in a dazed way.

Then, muttering incoherent expressions under his breath, he reeled off into the bushes and disappeared, without noticing the boy in the gloom.

Finally Fred pulled himself together, got up, took the key out of the switch lock, picked up the lantern and retraced his steps to the station.

"What's the matter with you, Sparks?" asked Harlow, regarding his assistant with some surprise. "You look as white as a sheet."

"I nearly missed connections, that's all."

"I noticed you were a long time getting the switch open. What was the trouble? Wouldn't the key work well?"

"It worked all right, but I was jumped by a rascal who must have been hiding somewhere down there, and I had the time of my life getting the best of him."

"Oh, that was it, eh? One of the night prowlers tried to rob you. A bad moment to be up against those scamps. So you beat him off?"

"If I hadn't done him up there'd have been a smash-up on the line. I barely had time to switch the runaway when the express was on me."

"Thank heaven things turned out all right!" said Harlow. "You've had a taste of what's before you if you remain at the station any time."

"What's the matter with the police force at Cresson? Why don't they clean the night-birds out?"

"They've tried it and failed. The prowlers keep out of sight whenever there's an officer around. To trace them to their retreats has proved an impossible job."

"I know the chap who attacked me. He and his pal were convicted of highway robbery at Glendale, Maine, about fifteen miles from where my folks live, and they were sentenced to ten years in State prison. That happened six months ago, and I can't understand how this fellow happens to be at liberty, unless he escaped."

On their way up the road to Cresson, Fred told Harlow the incidents which led to his acquaintance with Rowley and Jobkins, as well as his adventure in the field by the river road when he saved Major Stratton from being robbed.

"I see," remarked the station agent. "The rascal evidently managed to make his escape in some way. Now he's hanging around this neighborhood, or tramping it to Boston. He's got it in for you because of your hand in sending him up. It is probable that he'll get away from this locality as fast as he can, as he knows you have recognized him, and will put the police on his track."

"I'll go to the station-house at once, if you'll show me the way."

"I'll do that willingly."

When they reached the station-house in Cresson Fred told his story, and assured the chief of the force that Rowley was an escaped convict and ought to be recaptured.

The officer said he would send men out to try and catch him.

Fred was satisfied and returned to his boarding house.



The Cresson police caught Rowley next day several miles from the Junction, and he was returned to the prison from which he had escaped.

As for the night prowlers, they kept very quiet during the four weeks that Fred was learning how to run the station, and Harlow remarked that he guessed they had abandoned their old stamping-grounds.

At length the first of the month came around and with it the pay-car.

As soon as Harlow got his money he bade Fred goodby and the boy was left in full charge of the station.

At no time up to this point had the work been very hard, and consequently Fred had enjoyed a cinch while Harlow was around to help out; now that he was alone he did not apprehend that he would be overcrowded.

He had written three times to Edith, and had received two replies, penned in her neatest style on fine note paper bearing an embossed monogram.

On the day Harlow left he got an answer to his last letter, and its contents made him very happy, for the girl wrote more confidently than usual.

He read the letter several times during the day, and after supper, when in the seclusion of his own room, he put his hand in his pocket to get it for another perusal.

It was not there.

He searched all his pockets in vain for it, and then he recollected that while reading it that afternoon he had been interrupted by a message over the wire, and had laid it on a shelf in the office.

The message had taken his attention off it, and subsequent duties so engrossed his time that he had forgotten it.

Then the thought struck him that Mooney, the night operator, might notice it and take the liberty of reading it.

Not for a good deal would he have the man do that.

He determined to walk to the station, which was only a short distance away, and recover Edith's letter.

Besides, he would see how the night man was getting on.

So Fred put on his hat and went over to the Junction.

He glanced in through the ticket window as he walked to the door of the office.

Mooney was sitting with his chair tilted back, his feet on the table where the instrument was, a black bottle at his lips.

Until that moment Fred supposed that the operator confined his drinking to the tavern, as it was against the company's regulations to bring liquor into the station for consumption on the premises.

Now he understood what the late station agent meant when he said that his responsibilities were "unusual."

Suppose Mooney was to drink too much from that bottle some night and go to sleep, what might not happen?

If an accident occurred on the line owing to the failure of some operator at another station to get the Junction on the wire the blame might rest on him.

His career might be blasted at the outset, and then how could he hope ever to win Edith Wentworth, the bright star of his life?

It was with an anxious look on his face that Fred walked into the office and stepped toward the shelf on which the letter he had come for lay undisturbed.

Mooney whisked the bottle out of sight and glared in an unfriendly way at the new agent.

"What brought you back?" he snarled.

"This letter," replied Fred, as he put it in his pocket.

"Humph! I thought you came to spy on me."

"Why should I do that?" replied the boy, looking him in the eye.

Mooney showed a momentary confusion, then he grew defiant.

"Because Harlow may have told you to watch me."

"Why should he tell me to do that?" asked Fred, calmly.

"He told you I drank—hard, didn't he?"

"He did."

"I don't deny it," snorted the operator, still more defiantly. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing, as long as you drink away from the station."

"And suppose I take a few snifters here in the office—what then?"

"It's against the company's rules."

"To Hell with the company's rules!" gritted Mooney. "I do my work all right. I've never been reported. I'll drink when and where I please."

"I think you'd better cut the bottle out here," replied Fred, coolly.

"Who says so—you?" sneeringly.

"It's not doing you any good."

"That's my business."

"And mine," replied the boy, firmly.

"Yours! Confound you for a young whippersnapper, with your swelled head because you're the agent. Well, I'm thinking you won't last. It takes a man to run this station, not a beardless kid. Things are coming to a pretty pass when the super sends one of his favorites to lord it over a veteran like me. I won't stand it!"

Mooney brought his hand down on the table with a blow that made his pencil and pad jump.

"I won't stand it," he repeated. "Do you understand that?"

Fred made no reply, but looked him straight in the eye.

The operator writhed under his steady gaze.

There was something in the boy's eye that disconcerted him.

"Don't look at me that way!" he screamed. "Don't!" waving his arms wildly in front of his face. "You put me in mind of him!"

"Him! Who do you mean?"

Fred stepped forward, picked up the black bottle where the man had attempted to hide, opened the window and threw it out.

The crash of glass against the track aroused the operator.

He looked for his bottle as Fred was closing the window, saw it was gone and sprang to his feet in a rage.

"You've thrown it away!" he frothed.

"I have. I won't stand for anything like that in this station."

With a howl like a furious beast Mooney sprang at the boy.

"I'll break your neck!" he hissed. "You sha'n't boss it over me. I'll half kill you!"

In another moment the two had grappled in a desperate struggle.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FRED TAKES THE STARCH OUT OF PHIL MOONEY.

They swayed to and fro around the small office, banging up against the telegraph table, against the walls and getting tangled up with the chairs.

Mooney had come to the office with something of a jag on, and had been loading up since from the black bottle.

He was in a bad humor, and Fred's return had only aggravated it.

He had a standing grouch anyway against the young agent because he was a boy, and somebody's favorite, as he believed.

Having worked himself into a crazy fit, he was in a condition to do Fred a bad injury.

The boy saw that he was up against it hard, for Mooney was no mean antagonist.

He didn't want to hurt the operator if he could help it, but he soon saw that it was a question of downing the man or being downed himself.

Suddenly his feet were tripped from under him, and he went down with Mooney on top.

The shock dazed him, and he lay helpless.

The night operator uttered a shout of satisfaction, and picked up a heavy wrench that lay within his reach to hit the boy.

As he raised his arm to give the blow the sharp call of the Junction—D. G. 13—came from the instrument on the table, repeated over and over again.

It seemed to recall Mooney to a sense of his duty.

He dropped the wrench, jumped off his intended victim and staggered over to the table where he answered the call, and the following message was clicked off:

"Hold freight No. 61 on siding for special to pass. Repeat."

Mooney repeated the message back to the operator, and then came "O. K." back to him.

Fred, coming out of his daze, heard the message clearly.

It was the night operator's business, as soon as the "O. K." reached him, to set the switchlight, three hundred yards back.

This he could do, without leaving the office, by means of a rod within his reach.

Mechanically he threw out his hand to grasp the rod, but as his senses were somewhat confused he got hold of the wrong one and set the switch-light at the opposite end of the station.



Then he threw himself back in his chair, having apparently forgotten all about the young station agent.

In a few moments he began to nod, and by the time Fred got on his feet he was snoring loudly.

The boy regarded him with a disgusted and troubled air. Mooney was apparently useless for some hours, if not for the remainder of the night.

Fred would have to stand his "trick."

That was an awkward predicament to be placed in, for besides losing his proper rest he had but an imperfect knowledge of the night routine.

The first thing he did was to drag Mooney, chair and all, out into the waiting-room, where he left him near the stove.

Then he returned to the office, took up the train sheets and tried to familiarize himself with the situation.

While he was thus engaged he heard the rumble of the approaching freight, which he knew must be No. 61, ordered to be held up on the siding until a special following with right of way had passed.

Without looking at the switchlight rods, for he had seen Mooney reach out and set what he naturally supposed was the proper one, Fred picked up the lantern and started for the platform.

He opened the door just in time to be dazzled by the headlight of the freight as it came up and dashed by with a rumble and roar.

The engineer showed no disposition to slow down, and the boy gazed upon the speeding cars in great astonishment.

He couldn't understand why the driver had disregarded the signal.

Could Mooney have made a mistake?

Glancing at the rods, he saw that the night operator had indeed blundered.

The question was, could he repair the matter?

His fingers dropped to the telegraph key.

With feverish speed he sent the call to the operator at the tower.

The response came back immediately.

Then he wired: "Back Freight No. 61."

The operator's O. K. came back to him and the instrument became silent.

As a precautionary measure he set the block signal that should have been displayed by Mooney, so that in case the freight did not get back before the special came around the curve the latter would be stopped.

He took the lantern and went to the door to watch for the return of the freight, and in a short time he saw it backing down the main track.

He got it on to the siding just as the special came in sight, and he hastened to set the block signal to "a clear track ahead."

Mooney snored all through the night and awoke at sunrise fairly sober.

He was astonished to find himself sitting out in the waiting-room.

He made for the office at once and found Fred taking down a despatch.

"What does this mean?" he growled. "What are you doing here?"

"Taking your place so that things would go right," replied the boy, coolly.

"How did I get outside?"

"I put you there."

"You did?"

"After receiving an important message, and then setting the wrong signal, you fell back in your chair helplessly intoxicated."

The boy had him in his power, and so Mooney threw up the sponge and promised to be "good."

Thenceforth Fred had no further trouble with him of any importance.

Winter came on, wore away and merged into spring, and everything ran smoothly at the Junction.

The first of May was close at hand, and Fred had been just one year in the employ of the Eastern Railroad Co. when something happened.

Fred got a hint of coming advancement through Edith's last letter.

She couldn't tell him exactly what was on the tapis, but she had heard her father tell her mother that certain changes about to be put into force by the company would enable him to advance Fred Sparks to a more responsible job than he now held.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FRED IS MADE ACTING SUPERINTENDENT OF THE LAKEVIEW BRANCH.

One morning a dapper little man, with a curt, business-like air, dropped off the Boston & Portland east-bound express, which slowed up, but did not wholly stop at Cresson Junction.

Fred was making out a way-bill for a carload of stuff that was about to be shipped to Boston, and was rather surprised to see a stranger march into his office with the assurance of one who had the right to do so.

"Well, sir?" asked the young agent, brusquely.

"You're the station agent, I believe?" said the stranger, sharply.

"I am."

"Your name is Sparks?"

"That's right," replied Fred, in some surprise.

"I'm the travelling inspector of the road," said the intruder, tossing a card on the shelf in front of the ticket window where the boy was writing.

Fred glanced at the card and then at the man, who now had a bundle of papers in his hands.

He had heard of this gentleman, and knew that he was an important executive officer of the line.

"There is to be a change at this station," said the inspector, briskly.

"A change!" ejaculated Fred.

"Exactly. A new agent."

"Oh! And what about me?"

"You're shifted a peg higher."

"I do not quite understand," replied Fred, rather bewildered by the short, crisp way in which the inspector imparted his news.

"Here are your official instructions," said the company's representative, handing Fred a bulky envelope which bore the imprint of the superintendent's office.

It was addressed to "Frederick Sparks, Acting Superintendent, Lakeview Branch, Eastern Railroad Co., Cresson Junction."

Fred's eyes expanded to the size of small saucers.

"What does this mean?" he gasped.

"Plain enough, isn't it? You've been promoted."

"But the Lakeview Branch hasn't such a thing as a superintendent," protested Fred, who under other circumstances would have laughed at the idea of the short line to the lake, which was scarcely more than a summer road, having an official to supervise its operations.

"What does the envelope say?" replied the inspector in answer to his remark.

"It says 'Acting Superintendent of Lakeview Branch,' but—"

"That ought to be sufficient. New official."

"Oh!" exclaimed Fred, beginning to understand that the position had just been created to meet some new conditions in the business.

"The situation along the branch is about to undergo a change. You understand, of course, that its sphere of usefulness enlarges about this time of the year?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Hereafter the branch will become a more important part of the system. After this summer the steamers will not run to Bunkport, where they connect with the Eastern Division of the road."

"No?" replied Fred.

"No," answered the inspector, emphatically. "The company is about to continue the branch from Lakeview to Bunkport. Construction will begin immediately. When the line is fully completed it will be known as the Lakeview & Bunkport Branch, and you will take charge exclusively. Now you understand why a superintendent."

Fred bowed, for the argument was against him.

"When does this change go into effect?"

"On the first. Your office will be at the Junction till further notice. The salary will be—"

The inspector mentioned a very substantial increase over Fred's present income.

What wonderful news he would have to communicate to Edith in his next letter, unconscious that the girl of his heart already knew all about the matter.

The inspector took his leave and Fred saw him through the windows making notes with a view to certain needed improvements.



That afternoon he went to Lakeview to make further observations, and from there he went on to Bunkport.

Unknown to the young station agent the extension from Lakeview to Bunkport had already been surveyed and the right of way secured.

Two nights later a construction train, loaded with men and material, reached the Junction and was switched on to the branch.

Next day ground was broken south of Lakeview, and after that there was great activity in that direction.

On the morning of the first of May an early local dropped the new station agent at the Junction.

His name was Frank Jones.

He was a young man of twenty-two, and Fred took an immediate liking for him, which feeling was reciprocated.

Fred's instructions required him to exercise a general supervision over the Junction.

He had to attend to freight collections and other outside business.

His duties would take him to Lakeview, where the present agent was a woman operator who lived in the building, and ultimately to Bunkport when the road was in operation at that point.

Fred easily saw that when the branch connected the main line and the eastern division of the road it would develop into quite an important part of the system, and he felt a pardonable pride in the reflection that he would be at the head of its affairs.

Fred made his first trip to Lakeview the day after the new agent got into harness.

Mrs. Somers, the lady agent, was expecting to make his acquaintance, but she hardly anticipated seeing one so young holding a position that on completion of the branch to Bunkport would be virtually that of a small division superintendent.

However, she could not help taking a great liking to the bright, cheerful-looking boy, who addressed her as politely as he might a duchess.

He went over the business of the station, as it was and would be later on when the summer travel set in.

The assistant engineer in charge of the extension construction invited him to go over the new track as far as it had been completed, and he remained some time watching the work under way.

When he got back to the Junction he found a letter from Edith awaiting him.

Her letters, as a matter of course, were the chief pleasure of his life, and he read them over almost as many times as the young lady herself read his.

The letter was addressed: "Frederick Sparks, Esq., Acting Supt. Lakeview Branch, Eastern R. R. Co., Cresson Junction," and the superscription looked very important indeed in the eyes of the new official.

As usual it contained several pages of close-written manuscript, and the wonder was what Edith could find to cover so much good paper with, especially as the young people now exchanged confidences regularly once every week.

The girl always looked for Fred's letter on a certain day, and if it didn't come until the next her mother always could tell by the expression on her face.

One week she almost had a fit because, owing to some reason, the expected epistle was three days late.

If Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth had hoped that the transfer of Fred from Boston to Cresson Junction would break up the growing attachment between their daughter and the bright boy whose sole capital was energy, ambition and genuine capacity for work of a high order, they were disappointed.

It is quite possible that, with all their gratitude toward the boy, and their personal liking for him, they hardly considered him as a suitable match for their only and much-loved child, whose social standing was among the highest in the Hub.

It may be suspected that when Mrs. Wentworth observed the steady correspondence that ensued between the young people she had a very serious talk with Edith on the subject; but that young lady exercised a despotic sway over her parents, and she had many arguments to advance in Fred's behalf, the chief and most unanswerable of which was that but for her admirer she would probably be under the green turf of the family cemetery plot, instead of continuing as she was the light and sunshine of her home.

At any rate, she was accustomed to having her own way, and as she was fully convinced that she and Fred were made for each other, she was determined that the dear boy should have a fighting chance to win her.

## CHAPTER XV.

## A WIZARD FOR LUCK.

Before reading Edith's letter, which he was very impatient to do, Fred picked up an official envelope addressed to himself which had come down on the same train from the superintendent's office.

Tearing the end open he took out the contents and read them.

They were fuller and more explicit instructions relative to the conduct of the Lakeview Branch.

It was evident that the company regarded the short line now as something more important than a mere summer road.

Fred, as he read the superintendent's matter-of-fact letter, began to realize in full the growing responsibilities that rested on his young and comparatively inexperienced shoulders.

The company anticipated no failure on his part, and the boy began to wonder if he could continue to give the satisfaction he had done in the past.

When he laid the letter down there was a different expression on his face than had ever rested there before.

He felt as if years had passed over his head.

He was no longer a comparatively care-free lad, to whom the duties of station agent had seemed like second nature, but a man with a weight on his brain.

Edith noticed the change in his answer to his letter.

The eyes of love are quick to perceive the slightest alteration in that subtle essence that, like a wireless telegraph, flows from heart to heart.

As far as words went there was no change in Fred's usual style, but the girl missed something, and she began to ask herself what it was.

It was simply that the boy had ceased to be a boy—a fact she could not understand.

May and June passed and the third of July, an unusually hot day, was at hand.

The Lakeview Branch was in full swing, with two passenger trains running each way daily, and a freight at night.

Fred had his hands tolerably full of business as things were, and a lively anticipation of what would be in store for him when the extension was finished to Bunkport.

So far he had made good right up to the notch.

Everything was running as smoothly as a well-regulated machine.

Fred, in consequence, was feeling like a fighting-cock.

No word of commendation had reached him officially from headquarters.

He hardly expected that.

It was sufficient to know that nothing of the reverse order had come to hand.

But he was not left without words of praise and encouragement for all that.

These came in Edith's letters.

Her father had evidently kept himself well informed about the progress of the acting superintendent of the Lakeview Branch, and he had once in a while mentioned Fred to his daughter in a complimentary way that made the girl's heart glad.

And Edith had reported her father's words to her loving lover.

Edith and her mother were going to leave Boston on July 3 for their summer outing.

In her last letter, received by Fred that morning, she had stated that fact, but in a seemingly unaccountable way had neglected to give him a hint as to their destination, therefore he could not answer her letter, which he always did at once, until he heard from her again.

It wasn't like the girl to neglect such an essential particular, and Fred was surprised and disappointed that the omission existed.

"Oh, well," he thought, "in the hurry of packing and getting ready to be off she forgot it. When she gets to her hotel wherever they are bound for she'll be looking for the letter that will not come and then—maybe she won't give a scolding in her next."

That's the way Fred excused his little sweetheart.

He looked wistfully at the signature, "Yours lovingly Edith," and wondered when he would have the pleasure of seeing her.

It was nine months since he parted from her on Washington Street that afternoon when he left Boston to take charge



of the station at Cresson Junction, and a whole lot had happened since then.

He wondered, if she could see him now; would she notice any difference in him.

At that moment the shrill whistle of a locomotive was borne to his ears.

He hardly needed to glance at the clock to assure himself that that was the Boston and Portland Express which now stopped at the Junction to accommodate the summer travel up the branch.

Fred knew that there would be a mob for Lakeview that afternoon, for the next day was the Fourth.

The hotels had been filling up rapidly during the week, but a large proportion of their patrons came to Lakeview by the Eastern Division, and took the steamer up the lake at Bunkport.

The rest came by way of Cresson Junction.

Fred went out on the platform as the ponderous engine swept past with air-brakes set, and trailing behind it followed the mail, express and baggage cars, the smoker, day coaches, and drawing-room cars.

Frank Jones, the agent, came out behind him.

"President Wentworth's private car is attached to this train," he said. "It'll be dropped here, and I've received orders to see that it's hooked on to the Lakeview train that leaves in ten minutes."

"What!" almost shouted Fred. "The president's car, and it's going to Lakeview?"

The thought flashed across his mind—could that be the destination of Edith and her mother, and the girl hadn't even hinted the fact to him?

He stared after Jones, who was pushing his way down the platform through the streams of alighting passengers bound for Lakeview.

Why hadn't Edith told him?

Didn't she know that it offered her a chance to see him again?

Of course she couldn't help knowing it, then why—

But perhaps, after all, Edith and her mother were not aboard of the car.

Perhaps Mr. Wentworth had loaned the car to a party of his friends.

Well, he would go and see who were on the car.

It was his duty as well as the agent's to see that the car was attached to the Lakeview train.

As he passed down the platform he saw a vision of loveliness, in white attire, standing on the front platform of the private car.

His heart began to beat faster, for he was willing to swear that was Edith.

He hurried his steps, for he saw she was looking for some one, and who ought that some one to be but himself?

In another moment she singled him out and began waving her handkerchief at him.

He wanted to break into a run, but he felt that would be an undignified proceeding on the part of the acting superintendent of the Lakeview Branch, so he walked forward as fast as he could.

"Fred, you dear, dear boy," she cried, as he sprang up the steps and caught her by the hand.

"Edith, this a great surprise to me. You never——"

"Told you? I wanted to surprise you," she cried, with flushed face and dancing eyes.

"Well, you've done it, all right. How well you look," he said, looking at her with mingled admiration and love.

"Do I? And you—you haven't changed a bit, except you look manlier and handsomer than ever," she added, demurely.

"Thank you, Edith, you said that very nicely," he laughed, and there was a happy ring to the laugh. "You don't know how glad I am to see you."

"Are you really?" she said, laying her gloved hand caressingly on his arm. "Are you really, and truly glad to see——"

"My little sweetheart! Well, I guess I am!"

She blushed like a June rose and smiled coyly in his face.

The express pulled out at that moment, leaving the private car standing on the main track.

"Come inside and see mamma," said Edith, stepping toward the door.

Mrs. Wentworth greeted Fred very kindly.

"We are going to Lakeview to spend the summer," she said. "Edith wouldn't listen to any other place, so, I had to agree."

"Why Lakeview, Edith?" asked Fred, mischievously.

"Can't you guess?" she said, with a smile and a blush.

Fred thought he could, but he didn't say so.

The Lakeview train now backed down the track and the private car was coupled on.

"All aboard!" sang out the conductor.

"That means I've got to drop out," said Fred, extending his hand first to Mrs. Wentworth and then to the girl.

"Isn't it a shame!" cried Edith. "But you'll be up tomorrow, won't you? We're going to stop at the Lakeview. Remember, I'll look for you."

"I'll be up in the afternoon, and I guess I can manage to stop over," he said as the train began to move. "Good-bye till then."

He jumped off and watched the flutter of a handkerchief as long as he could see it.

He kept his word, and called at the Lakeview Hotel at five next day.

He dined with Edith and her mother, and then he and the girl went out for a walk together to watch the fireworks.

They had a great deal to say to each other which wouldn't interest the reader, but which was extremely interesting to their two selves.

The tete-a-tetes were continued at frequent intervals all through the summer nights, and when the first of September came around, and Edith had to return to Boston, they parted with mutual regret.

Their last night together both remembered a long time.

"You know I love you, Edith, and I know you love me, isn't it so?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, softly.

"Then why deny me one kiss at parting?" he asked, wistfully.

"Because the gulf is not yet spanned, dear. When you can go to papa and mamma and ask them for me, and they give their consent, then I will be wholly yours, and you may kiss me; but until then you must be patient, for though my heart is yours my hand is yet to be won. It is up to you to win it."

On Christmas week the first train ran through from the Junction to Bunkport, and now Fred was no longer designated as the acting superintendent, but the superintendent of the Lakeview & Bunkport Branch.

And did he fill the bill?

Well, rather, for he was fighting for a dainty prize in Life's Lottery, and he was determined to win, be the odds what they might.

During the year that followed Fred built the branch line up in a way that won the hearty commendation of the general superintendent and President Wentworth.

He was evidently the right person in the right place, but he was too useful an employee to be kept on a branch line when an opening for division superintendent occurred.

On his twenty-first birthday he was put in charge of the Eastern Division of the road, and a year later was transferred to the Portland Division of the main line.

After nine months' service he was shifted to the Boston Division, with an office in the depot building where he had first begun his career of railroading in the Claim Department.

These shifts had all been made for a purpose, and at the instigation of President Wentworth.

It was to make him familiar with the whole system. Mr. Wentworth, having weighed him in the balance and found him full weight, determined he should eventually succeed Mr. Lamport as general superintendent of the road.

It was not expected that he would attain this office for some years, but here Fred's luck again came in play—Mr. Lamport was found dead in his office one afternoon, a victim of heart failure, and thus at the age of twenty-five Fred Sparks became virtual head of the Eastern Railroad.

Then he went to Mr. Wentworth and asked him for Edith's hand.

Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth had long accepted this as a foregone conclusion, and so the answer was favorable.

Then Edith placed her hand in his and said:

"The gulf is spanned at last, and I am wholly yours. Now you may kiss me."

And thus Fred won both fame and fortune—fame as the best superintendent the Eastern road ever had, and fortune with Edith, for she was an heiress to a million.

Next week's issue will contain "A FORTUNE AT STAKE; OR, A WALL STREET MESSENGER'S DEAL."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE



## CURRENT NEWS

Mrs. Mary Brundage, the seventy-five-year-old widow of the late Superior Judge Bernard Brundage, a pioneer of Kern County, Cal., was registered as freshman in the Kern County High School, and will study the Spanish language. Mrs. Brundage has several grandchildren attending the high school at which she is registered.

The famous old apple tree planted in the lower part of Vancouver Barracks in 1826 bore quite a little fruit this year. The apples were as large as baseballs. The apple tree is the oldest on the Pacific Coast, and the legend has it that the seeds for it were brought from London, England, by an officer for the Hudson's Bay Company. Ten or more trees grew up but all have disappeared but this one which is protected by a wire fence.

Frank J. Hardy, of Chicago, Ill., had almost given up hope of having a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. Thirty-five cents a pound for an undressed bird seemed an awful price to pay. But Mrs. Hardy, who is an economical housewife, said she could get along without the fancy extras, so Hardy bought the fowl. In dressing the turkey Mr. Hardy found a diamond stud in the bird's crop. It was a pure white stone, weighing almost a carat, and valued at \$150.

"Historic Events of Colonial Days," by Rupert S. Holland, has just reached us from George W. Jacobs & Co., Philadelphia. This book tells of some of the most dramatic episodes in colonial history, such as How Peter Stuyvesant Flew the Flag of the New Netherlands, How Nathaniel Bacon Stirred Up the Old Dominion, When the Pirates Were in Charleston Harbor, How the Colony of Connecticut Saved Its Charter, When the Green Mountain Boys Met the Yorkers. Each fully illustrated. Large 12mo, cloth, decorated cover.

Cricket dates from the reign of Queen Elizabeth and had its origin in rounders and stool ball. Lord Chesterfield was the first man of weight to take it seriously and Eton the first public school. In those days scores were notched upon tally sticks, the ball had heavy cross seams, the bats were curved, and the fielders stood almost in Indian file. The early laws of the game had their inception at the Star and Garter inn, Pall Mall, and one of the few of these original laws which obtain to-day is that of the toss-up. The wickets were twenty-two inches high and the ball 14 inches in diameter. The first country match was when Kent played all England in 1711.

The Canadian munition industry has been developed to a point where it is independent of the United States. This announcement was made on Nov. 10 by the Imperial Munitions Board, which is responsible for placing \$500,000,000 of shell orders in Canada for the British government. Heretofore fuses, primers and steel were largely obtained from the United States. The industry has been developed in Canada, it is asserted, until all the component parts of shells can now be made in the Dominion. Orders are out which will keep the Canadian plants going until July next. Canada's war expenditures during the seven months ended Oct. 31 of the fiscal year aggregated nearly \$127,500,000, or an average of more than \$18,000,000 monthly, according to figures issued in Ottawa on the same date.

Wage increases in New Hampshire industrial establishments, affecting, according to a conservative estimate, 50,000 workers, have been made during the past summer and autumn, most of them coming in October and November. John S. B. Davie, State Commissioner of Labor, states that these wage increases will average for all New Hampshire about 10 per cent., the percentage of increase in some instances being as high as 20. The largest corporations which have announced wage advances are Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, Manchester, 15,500 employees, 10 per cent.; Stark Mills, Manchester, 1,173 employees, 10 per cent.; McElwain Shoe Company, with 5,704 employees in Nashua and Manchester, 10 per cent., with a shortening of the work week from fifty-five hours to fifty-two; International Paper Company, with several hundred employees at Berlin, 10 per cent.

Perhaps the youngest "real cowboy" in the Northwest is Maurice Paul Gowdy, ten, son of Chester Gowdy, who, with Bert Waite of Sioux City, is the owner of the Fort Sully Cattle Company, the biggest cattle ranch in the central portion of the State, located along the Missouri River twenty-six miles northwest of Pierre, S. D. Maurice is ten years old. He and an older cowpuncher took a train-load of cattle from Pierre to the ranch, over the river buttes. The boy did his full share of the work of driving the cattle the long distance, so as to miss no school day. It required riding from about 3:30 o'clock in the morning until nearly sundown. The ranch grazes thousands of heads of cattle, both on the lowland and the highlands along the Missouri. It is probably the last of the really big ranches in this section of the Northwest. The ranch was owned formerly by Tom Steel, Bert Waite of Sioux City, and Chester Gowdy, of Tarkio, Mo., but at present is owned by Waite and Gowdy only.



# ON TOP

## OR

### THE BOY WHO GOT THERE

By ED KING

(A SERIAL STORY.)

#### CHAPTER XII (Continued).

Tiff and Tug had been witnesses of all this with mingled emotions. They were prepared to stand by the Sailor.

But the appearance of Colonel Pulsifer put an instant end to all. Gaines' manner quickly changed, and he bowed low to the millionaire.

"All right, Colonel! We're putting the harness on Sadie now. You say they're getting ready for the score? I'll be there!"

With rapid fingers Tiff and Tug helped the Sailor to buckle the harness onto the little race mare. She was quickly hitched into the sulky.

Then Gaines got into the seat and drove out onto the track. As he did so Tiff saw Horner standing by the gate and saw him exchange signals with Gaines.

The Sailor saw it also, and his brow clouded.

"I see the chap," he muttered. "He's a professional gambler from the far West. But if Jimmie Gaines don't win this heat there'll be trouble."

Just then Tiff felt a touch on his shoulder. He turned with surprise to face Colonel Pulsifer. The horse owner's face was very pale.

"Step aside here, my boy," he said, in a low tone. "I want to talk with you."

Tiff obeyed with a queer sensation. But the next words spoken by the colonel staggered him.

"Tiff, do you think you could drive Sadie in a race?"

"Drive Sadie?"

"Yes."

"Why, Colonel Pulsifer, you surprise me! I am not a professional driver."

"No, I am aware of that. And that is why I am asking you the question."

"Well," replied Tiff slowly, "I think I could drive her. Yes, sir!"

"All right," said Pulsifer, with set lips. "We'll see what Jimmie does this heat."

"What? Do you think of pulling him out and putting me in to drive in his place?"

"We'll see! I'll explain a little something to you. I was in the next stall and overheard the whole story you told Sailor. I know that Jimmie Gaines is in a dishonest deal. He may be the victim of

this fellow Horner. I want to see what he is going to do."

"Colonel Pulsifer," said Tiff earnestly, "it is all true. This man Horner is a scoundrel. I fear that he has a hold on Gaines and he is compelled to do as he says."

"Come with me," said the Colonel grimly. "We will watch this heat."

Tiff followed the colonel into the grand stand. The horses were scoring.

The crowd was cheering for Sadie Mack. She was a hot favorite. Each time she scored down ahead of the other horses.

Suddenly the word was given. The trotters sped away around the turn. Over to the quarter pole they went like meteors.

Bunko Boy had the pole and was in the lead. Sadie Mack seemed pocketed among the rest.

Shouts of disappointment and disapproval went up from the crowd. There were angry cries.

"She is being pulled! Take him out! Put in a new driver!"

Into the stretch swung the horses. The drive home was a hard one. Bunko Boy won by half a length and Sadie Mack was fourth. There was an ominous silence in the crowd.

Tiff saw Horner walking up the quarter stretch. There was a grim smile upon his saturnine face.

Colonel Pulsifer's face was white and set. He descended from the grand-stand and walked up to the judge's stand.

"Gentlemen," he said to the judges, "I wish to notify you that I am not satisfied with the way my mare was driven in that last heat. I am going to put on a new driver."

"All right, colonel," said the starting judge. "Send him over to weigh in!"

Tiff went with the colonel back to the stall. Tug and Sailor were rubbing the mare out. Gaines stood coolly by.

"I got a bad start that heat, colonel," said the driver. "I could have won it only for the pocket. I'll bring her down to the wire the next heat, all right."

"Do you mean that, Gaines?" asked the colonel.

"Why, yes! Barring an accident."

"I don't believe you will," said the colonel sharply.

"You'll never draw line over Sadie Mack again."



A thunderbolt could not have given Gaines a greater shock. He gasped and stared at his employer.

"You're joking!" he exclaimed.

"No, I am not!"

"Why, Colonel Pulsifer——"

"No use to make excuses, Gaines! I know all about your little business with Horner. I am done with you forever. You will kindly remove your effects from my premises and never return."

"Colonel—I—it is a lie! It is the fabrication of Sailor, and I'll square it with him," fumed Gaines. "You hired me to drive the mare, and I'm going to win the race."

"No, you won't."

"Who is going to drive her?"

"I have a man! We will not discuss the matter further."

Then Gaines lost his head. Rage got the better of him, and he hurled epithets and threats and abuse at Sailor and at Tiff and even at the colonel. But now the bell rang for the second heat.

Tiff had weighed in properly and was ready. Sailor was delighted and patted him on the back.

"You'll do the trick, boy! Only hold her head and let her do the rest. She will take you through all right."

As Tiff got into the sulky a tall figure passed by the wheel. A hissing voice reached his ear, and he caught a glimpse of Horner's dark, malevolent face.

"If you drive that mare to win you'll never reach Montana alive!"

Tiff ignored the threat, and the next moment was jogging onto the track.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A FIT OF GOOD FORTUNE.

It was a thrilling sensation to Tiff to sit in the light sulky and drive the fleet little trotting mare down the stretch with the field of fast horses to the score.

The great multitude on the grand-stand seemed to him like a dream far away. Their cheering rung in his ears like distant thunder.

But after the first thrill of excitement he was as cool as ice, and had perfect command of his nerve. He skilfully handled the ribbons over the fast little mare.

Sadie Mack was very tractable and level. She did not lug or pull, and only needed to be steadied in her gait.

Seven times the horses scored. Then the word to go was given.

Tiff sat quite still and let Sadie go as she pleased until the first turn was made. He had seen enough of race driving to teach him to play a waiting game. So he did not at once try to beat the other horses. He simply kept his position.

Now the horses were going down to the half. Tiff let Sadie out a trifle and she moved like magic up into second place. He was now at the wheel of the black horse, Bunko Boy.

Even at that stage Tiff knew that he had the heat won. He waited until the corner into the stretch was turned before making the last drive.

Then he drove right around Bunko Boy, and was first under the wire by a length.

The uproar that followed was tremendous. The crowd would have rushed out upon the track but for the high fence and the police.

When Tiff dismounted from the sulky Colonel Pulsifer with radiant face met him.

"You drove like a veteran," he cried. "Gaines never did better!"

"I am glad," said Tiff honestly.

Sailor and Tug were transported with delight. When the stable was reached there was a general jubilee.

Nothing was to be seen of Gaines or of Horner. The next heat Tiff won in easy style, thus securing the race. His reputation might have been made then and there as a driver of trotters.

Colonel Pulsifer came down to the stall after the race, and placed a roll of bills in Tiff's hand. The youth was staggered when he saw that they represented two hundred dollars.

"Oh, Colonel Pulsifer, I really cannot accept so much," he protested.

"What?" exclaimed the colonel. "That is only a fraction of what you ought to have. Do you know what those Western Stakes are worth to me? Over ten thousand dollars. Just you keep the money. That is not all! I'll be glad to give you a contract to drive my horses indefinitely at a good big salary."

Tiff's blood tingled. It seemed to him as if success was attending him on every hand. The temptation was a powerful one.

"Great Scott! Of course you'll take it, Tiff," whispered Tug. "It's a big thing for us. And what a life for us!"

But Tiff shook his head.

"I thank you, Colonel Pulsifer," he said. "Your offer is a kind and generous one. But I have other plans. I do not intend to drive horses for a living."

The colonel looked at him curiously. The boy's handsome refined face and dignified manner impressed him.

"Pardon me," he said quickly. "I can see that you are capable of entering a higher sphere. But in starting life we often have to take up an humble occupation."

"I appreciate that, Colonel Pulsifer," said Tiff. "But I am anxious to reach my land in Montana and begin to develop it."

Then Tiff told of his bequest from Moses Fiske, and the conditions attached. The colonel listened with interest.

(To be continued.)



# FACTS WORTH READING

## NO DYE SHORTAGE NOW.

I. F. Stone, president of the National Aniline and Chemical Co., told members of the National Silk Association, in convention at Paterson, N. J., a few days ago, that dye-making factories in America are at present turning out enough dyes to supply the entire demand in this country. It is said that part of the Deutschland's cargo of dyes brought from Germany some time ago still remains unsold at the Baltimore warehouses.

## AMUNDSEN BUYS FIFTY TONS OF FOOD FOR DASH.

Fifty tons of food were purchased recently by Captain Roald Amundsen, discoverer of the South Pole, in preparation for his expedition to the North Pole. Provisions will be taken, he said, for a six-year stay in the North. The supplies include ten tons of canned meats and twenty tons of flour.

Captain Amundsen plans to make the final dash to the pole in an airplane.

## CAT RODE FLYWHEEL.

Tom, the big cat pet of the woodsmen in a mill at Sheboygan, Wis., had a most unusual joy ride and escaped with his life, or one of them.

The big cat attempted to leap through a sixteen-foot flywheel while it was making seventy-one revolutions per minute, but was caught in the wheel and held for twenty minutes, when the engine was stopped.

During the ride the cat travelled 68,160 feet, or twelve and three-fourths miles. He was picked up as dead, but one hour later ate a heavy meal.

## PASSES CONFEDERATE BILL.

A few days ago a stranger appeared at Jake Grubbs' farmhouse, near Macon, Mo., and asked to buy some cider. Grubbs filled two bottles for him and charged him 40 cents. The stranger handed him a \$10 bill and walked away. As soon as the farmer could scrape together the necessary \$2.60 in change he hurried after him and though somewhat puzzled by the man's reluctant manner he made him take the money. When Grubbs attempted to buy groceries he learned that the piece of paper which the man had given him was worthless; it was an old Confederate bill issued during the Civil War.

## SPRING LIKE GEYSER.

Upon his return from an inspection trip in Wyoming, A. C. McCain, Assistant District Forester, reported that he had rediscovered a strange geyser-like spring of clear and cold water about seven miles from Afton.

The spring flows with great volume for twenty minutes and then ceases for the same length of time.

This spring furnishes about half the volume of Swift Creek, and played a great part in the failure of the sawmill enterprise several years ago, according to Mr. McCain.

A settler established a mill on Swift Creek. When he turned the water into the millrace his troubles began. For twenty minutes the volume was sufficient to turn the wheels and then for the next twenty minutes everybody was idle.

## PRINTER WOKE UP IN TIME.

Harry Daugherty, a printer of Mount Pleasant, Ohio, was dead to all intents and purposes the other evening. The members of the household where he lived so reported to an undertaker and the coroner. The coroner immediately notified the man's parents of the death and asked the relatives if they wanted an investigation made.

When the coroner and the undertaker, carrying a dead basket between them, opened the gate leading into the yard, they met Daugherty, hale and hearty, going to work.

Exhausted from a long day's work, Daugherty had lain down on the bed for a nap when another member of his household, seeing him, became frightened and, thinking him dead, notified the authorities.

## IMPREGNABLE BANK VAULT.

One of the largest and strongest bank vaults in the world was put into commission recently in the new Fifth Avenue Branch of the Guaranty Trust Company, at the corner of Forty-third street, New York.

The main door of this vault weighs nearly forty tons and looks like the polished steel breech block of a great gun. It is so accurately balanced, however, that it can be swung to and fro by a hand pressure. The combination of the vault is not on the door, but on the jamb, at one side. This is the latest handicap that the safe-maker has placed on the safe-breaker. The mechanism of the combination might be blown away by some powerful explosive without impairing the impregnable safety of the safe.

Moreover, the combination can only be seen by the person who manipulates it. There are nearly 5,000 steel boxes in the vault room, arranged in tiers on the side. There are wall mirrors at the ends of the cross aisles. They are an added element for protection, for any can be seen in them from anywhere. Even the 2,000-lb. central safe can be viewed on all sides by the means of diagonal mirrors.



# GOOD AS WHEAT

OR

## THE BOY WHO WAS ALL RIGHT

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY.)

### CHAPTER IV (Continued).

"Well, I should say so!" and Kittie seized her friend, kissed her and pulled her into the house.

"I have a friend; can he come in?" laughed Lucy.

"Of course; come in, sir," to Bob, who entered at once, and stood there, cap in hand, a quiet smile on his face.

"Kittie, this is Mr. Bob Hardy," said Lucy.

Kittie extended her hand and said frankly:

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Hardy."

"The pleasure is mutual, I assure you," he said, pleasantly

Then Kittie closed the door and called out:

"Mother, it's Lucy! Come here."

A good-looking, buxom woman of perhaps forty-five years came from an adjoining room and kissed Lucy and gave her a cordial welcome, and was then introduced to Bob.

She gave him a keen, searching glance, and it was evident that she was pleased with his appearance. Then she looked at Lucy, and then at the bundle which she carried.

Lucy noticed this and said quickly:

"I have left home—or Bill Bunker's cabin, rather; I can't really call it home—and I have come to ask you if you will give me a home, Mrs. Wilson."

"Of course I will. Left him, have you? Well, I'm glad of it. He is a bad man, and that was no place for you."

"He tried to beat me, Mrs. Wilson, and he would have handled me very severely, I'm afraid, if this young man had not come along and made him behave himself."

"Come and sit down and tell us all about it," cried Kittie eagerly.

They sat down, and Lucy told the story in detail, and spoke so glowingly of Bob's bravery in protecting her from the ruffian, Bunker, that the youth placed his hand over her mouth, playfully, and laughingly exclaimed:

"Spare my blushes, Lucy. Don't pile it on, little girl. I did no more than any honest man or boy would have done in my place. But I tell you I am glad it was me that happened along instead of some other fellow," and he gave Lucy a look that brought the blood surging up to her cheeks.

She hastened on with her story to cover her embarrassment, and when she had finished both Mrs. Wilson and Kittie assured her that she was welcome to make her home with them as long as she wished—if that were always.

"Oh, you won't have to keep her always," said Bob, laughingly, and again Lucy blushed, but there was deep down in her eyes a pleased gleam that Mrs. Wilson and Kittie both noticed.

"Have you had supper?" asked the woman, suddenly. "I never thought to ask you."

"I have," said Lucy.

"I haven't," from Bob.

"I'll set out something for you right away, Mr.—"

"Call me Bob, Mrs. Wilson."

"Very well, Bob."

The woman quickly placed some food on the table in the kitchen, and while Bob was eating, Lucy talked fast to Kittie, and a little later Kittie said something to her mother, who, when Bob had finished, asked him to stay all night.

"Thank you, Mrs. Wilson; I shall be pleased to stay," said Bob.

"And he will play on his violin for us, won't you, Bob?" cried Lucy, eagerly.

"I'll do anything for you, Lucy," was the quiet, but earnest reply.

### CHAPTER V.

#### BOB TALKS SENSE.

Bob got out his violin and played some for his new friends.

It is safe to say that he had never played better in his life. Lucy's pretty face was an inspiration to him, and he played some fine selections, such as he never played in the bar-rooms, where he was wont to play for the edification of the rough miners.

The woman and the two girls applauded each piece, and when he presently stopped, they drew long breaths.

"I never heard anything like it," breathed Kittie.

"Nor I," from Lucy.

"You are a splendid player, Bob," from Mrs. Wilson.

"I'm glad you liked it," said Bob, modestly.



They talked an hour, and then Mrs. Wilson said that it was time for them to go to bed.

She conducted Bob upstairs to his room and left a small hand-lamp for him to see to undress by.

He lost no time in getting ready for bed. Then he blew out the light and tumbled in and was asleep in a jiffy.

He slept soundly till morning, and then got up and dressed.

He went downstairs and found Mrs. Wilson at work cooking breakfast. The girls were not yet down.

He washed his face and hands and combed his hair, and then sat in the dining-room.

The girls came down presently, and they had already made their toilettes. Mrs. Wilson had taken them up some water as soon as she got up.

They gave Bob a cheery good morning, and he returned the salutation in kind.

Breakfast was soon ready, the girls having set the table, and the four set down and ate heartily.

After breakfast was over Bob stayed an hour or so and talked to Mrs. Wilson and the girls.

At last he rose, and with something like a sigh said:

"Well, I can't stay here forever, much as I would like to. I must get out and hustle for a living. I thank you, Mrs. Wilson, for your hospitality."

"You are more than welcome, Bob," she said earnestly. "Didn't you do Lucy a great kindness? And I think almost as much of her as I do of Kittie."

"It was a pleasure to be of assistance to her, Mrs. Wilson," with a quick glance at the girl that made her color up becomingly.

"How long are you going to be in Silverton?" Mrs. Wilson asked.

"I don't know. As long as I can make anything by playing my violin, I guess."

"That will be a good while, likely."

"Yes, this is a lively place," said Kittie.

"Indeed it is," from Lucy.

"Well, I'll stay as long as I can make a dollar," declared Bob.

"You are intending to go to a hotel?"

"Yes, Mrs. Wilson."

"Don't do it, Bob. Stay here with us. You are more than welcome."

The girl's eyes glistened with eagerness. They tried hard not to show that it would give them pleasure to have Bob stay, but it was evident that such was the case, nevertheless.

"Are you sure I would not discommode you?" Bob asked.

"Quite sure, Bob. You can have that room, and we have plenty of food, such as it is."

"The food is all right, Mrs. Wilson, and to have a room for my own exclusive use would remind me of the time, long ago, when I had a home," said Bob earnestly. "I shall be glad to accept your kind invitation on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you let me pay my board, the same as I would have to do at the hotel."

"All right, Bob," with a smile. "You may do so."

"Then consider the matter settled. I'll stay."

"Very well; you are to make yourself as much at home here, as though you had always lived here."

"I will do so."

The girls did not say anything, but the look in their eyes was indicative of the fact that they were delighted.

As Bob took up his violin case to start out, however, Kittie said:

"We'll have music often, Lucy. Won't that be nice?"

"Indeed it will!"

"But you girls must remember that Bob will be tired after playing for hours on a stretch," said Mrs. Wilson.

"Oh, I'll never be too tired to play for you folks," smiled Bob.

Then, with a cheery good-by, he attracted the attention of people whom he met. Some made remarks, but he paid no attention to them. He was a man of the world in experience, though only a youth in years.

He stopped in front of a good-sized building which bore the high-sounding appellation of "The United States Hotel," and after hesitating a few moments entered.

There were only about half a dozen men in the barroom besides the bartender.

They looked at the boy with some show of interest, and he went up to the bartender and asked if he would allow him to play in there that evening and take up a collection from the miners.

"Sartin," was the reply. "An' I'll give ye all ther free drinks ye want bersides. Et'll draw trade probberly."

"I won't want any free drinks, for I never drink," was the reply.

The bartender stared.

"Ye never drink?" he exclaimed, as though he could hardly believe that he had heard aright.

"No, sir. I don't think it is good for boys."

"Oho, mebbe et hain't."

"Mebbe ye think et hain't good fur men, neither, sonny?" snarled one of the men at a table in the corner.

"Well, I don't think it is good for men," the boy replied quietly; "but I have nothing to say against any one drinking it who wishes to do so."

"Oh, is thet so?" ironically. "I thort thet mebbe ye wouldn't let enny uv us drink while ye air aroun'!"

Bob laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, you're quite welcome to drink while I'm here," he replied.

"Thank ye!"

"Oh, you're welcome."

"Say, kid, whut makes ye think whisky hain't good fur men? Tell me whut hurt et does."

(To be continued.)



## TIMELY TOPICS

### BURIED 123 YEARS, BODY WELL PRESERVED LIKE MUMMY.

Buried 123 years ago, according to the tombstone's inscription, the body of John Black, an ancestor of James C. Packer, of Sunbury, Pa., was disinterred recently for removal from the William Penn to the Pomfret Manor Cemetery. W. G. Minier, the undertaker, was surprised to find the body in a good state of preservation, with all the signs of being mummified. Nine other bodies were also removed and found to be in almost the same condition.

### COMBINATION OF ELECTRIC LAMP AND STOVE.

Norman G. Nicoll of Newark, N. J., has been granted a patent on an electric lamp that may be used as a stove as well. The shade of the lamp contains the heating unit, which may be connected to the socket of the lamp by inverting it, removing a screw top of ornamental design, and screwing the bared attachment plug into the socket of the lamp stand. Liquid may be placed in the bowl of the inverted lamp shade, or a number of utensils contained in the base of the lamp may be employed in cooking the food.

### A NEW BOOK FOR JUVENILE READERS.

"Bob Hunt in Canada," by George W. Orton, has just been issued by George W. Jacobs & Co., Philadelphia. It is a story suited to juveniles of from 10 to 15 years of age, and should become very popular. The story tells how Bob Hunt and his party rough it in the Canadian woods, becoming manly and self-reliant through their out-door activities. Their days are spent hiking, canoeing, swimming, and fishing, and in the evenings, while gathered around the camp fire, weird tales are related. The freedom of the camp life will delight all boy readers, and will instil a love for the open in the hearts of those who have not already experienced it. A book to induce both physical and mental health.

### 1,522 MORE INDIANS IN U. S.

An instructive and profitable year has been enjoyed by the Indians, according to the report of Cato Sells, Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

"They have made a remarkable showing in increased acreage and yield of lands cultivated," Commissioner Sells reports. "Their stock interests, both individual and tribal, have been a wonderful success."

There were 209,224 Indians when the report was written, an increase of 1,522 over a year ago. Health and educational campaigns, the report says, reduced the general death rate from 35.55 to 1,000 to 23.33.

The employment of Indians for exhibition purposes by Wild West and other shows has been discouraged as being neither educative nor conducive to formation of habits of industry and thrift."

### TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHT PLANNED BY NORWEGIAN.

Kjell Nyegaard, a Norwegian naval lieutenant, and Hugo Sundstedt, a Swedish naval captain, will sail to New York soon to prepare for a transatlantic aeroplane flight, according to the Aerial Age Weekly. They will carry as passengers Lieutenant Nyegaard's wife. The Norwegian aviator expects to purchase a Curtiss machine of larger type than that built for Rodman Wanamaker. He intends it to be a triplane of 131 feet wing spread, equipped with six motors of 160 horsepower each, capable of lifting 5,000 kilograms (55 tons), carrying six persons, with a fuselage constructed like a motor boat, with a water propeller, so if forced to alight on the ocean they can chop away the planes, proceeding as a motor boat. It is understood that the start is to be made from Newfoundland in April or May, when favorable winds prevail, and reach Ireland in 20 hours, continuing to London without stopping, if all is well. The performance would win the Paris *Matin* and London Daily Mail prizes of \$50,000 each, besides other cash awards.

### A BIG TELESCOPE.

For the present, and until the completion of the 100-inch reflector now being built for the Mt. Wilson observatory, this telescope has the honor of being the largest in the world.

This optical giant is located in the Dominion Observatory at Little Saanich Mountain, Vancouver Island. Like all the largest telescopes of recent years, this one is of the reflector type. Seventy-two inches in aperture and 31 feet long, it weighs 12 tons dismounted and 55 tons with all its fittings.

In spite of the firm foundation of concrete piers necessitated by this great mass, the tube is so delicately mounted that it responds instantly to the smallest push. In fact, the excess of the current required to move the telescope at its top speed, over that necessary to run the motors light, is barely sufficient to feed a sixteen-candle-power lamp.

The enormous mirror which, in the reflecting telescope, takes the place of the lens in concentrating the rays of light, weighs 2½ tons, measures 73 inches from edge to edge, is 12 inches thick at its outer rim, and is pierced by a hole 10½ inches in diameter. The silvered upper surface acts as a parabolic mirror to bring the reflected light to a focus 30 feet above the mirror. Made in Belgium, it was shipped just two days before the declaration of war.



# Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, JANUARY 19, 1917.

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## Good Current News Articles

That the American Indian is not deteriorating is the deduction made from the examination of Indian babies at the Bad River fair at Odanah, Wis., recently. Twenty-two Chippewa babies were measured, weighed, calipered and given rigid physical tests. The report of the examiners is that the subjects averaged better than the white babies who were examined at a recent baby show at Ashland.

Plans are under way for the establishment of a steamship line between Japan and Brazil to promote emigration to the latter country. It is stated that the first steamer of the new line will leave Japan next February with 900 emigrants. According to arrangements already made, it is said, Japan will send to Brazil every year 5,000 emigrants to be employed in cultivating rice, beans, potatoes, onions and coffee.

A gray wolf measuring five feet from tip to tip was killed about seven miles southwest of Naples, N. Y., the other afternoon. Hunters, with dogs, tracked the animal for several days and finally, after he was wounded, drove him out from cover and shot him. Damage amounting to more than \$1,000 was done to sheep herds before the animal was caught. It is the first wolf to be seen hereabouts in the memory of the oldest resident.

A fine specimen of snowy or Arctic owl was bagged by F. LaRouche, in his chicken yard at Portland, Ore. After lying in wait with a club, LaRouche discovered the owl. He was feasting on one of his chickens. A blow from the club knocked the bird over. William L. Finley, State biologist, says that the species inhabits the Northern regions, and when unusually heavy weather prevails they migrate southward. Mr. Finley thinks that the bird's early visit indicates more of his kind are to come during the winter.

Among the fossils recently discovered by the United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior, are remarkably well preserved impressions or casts of leaves of several extinct varieties of ash, oak, beech, and hickory, which were found, along with three present-day species, in States bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Although the leaves themselves have rotted and gone, here and there some were buried in soft clay by sediment in such a way as to leave perfectly preserved impressions. The nuts, on the other hand, neither decayed nor petrified, but fell into pools of stagnant water, which is one of the best preservatives in nature, and sooner or later were also buried under silt and clay. Owing to their hard coats, those which fell into places favorable to their preservation are to-day in excellent condition, though slightly flattened by the long soaking and the gentle pressure of the clay. The deposit in which the leaves and nuts are found is not less than a million years old, or at least a hundred times as old as the pyramids of Egypt.

## Grins and Chuckles

Cholly—How old is your sister? Johnny—Twenty-six, going on twenty-five.

Teacher—Johnny, what is a hypocrite? Johnny—A boy wot comes t' school wid a smile on his face.

Miss Oldwun—I've refused many, many offers of marriage. Gayboy. (absent-mindedly)—I'm sure that's very thoughtful and considerate of you.

Harkins—Why don't Walker stop to speak? I thought he knew you. Barkins—He used to; but I introduced him to the girl he married. Neither of them recognize me now.

Crafty Milliner—Really, Miss Patsy, the white feather on your hat makes you look at least five years younger. Miss Patsy—Well, you may—or—put a couple more on it.

Lady Helyer—Come, Johnny. I'm sure you can manage one more piece of cake. Johnny (in a hoarse whisper)—No, thanky, mum. A' can still eat, but a' can't swaller!

Gus—I hear George has married an heiress. He's in clover now, I suppose? Dick—No, he's working like a horse, trying to pay his board at a \$40-a-week hotel. Her father pays hers, and she won't live anywhere else.

Little George (to debt collector)—Father isn't in, but he told me to ask you to call to-morrow. Collector—He will be at home then, will he? George—No, sir; he'll be out. That's why he told me to tell you to call then.



## DOCTOR NIGHT-OWL.

By Alexander Armstrong

"That was a narrow escape of Barron's last night."

"Indeed it was; the fright has turned his hair to the color of snow."

"And well it might. Did the man escape?"

"Yes; and there are no traces of him to be seen."

"He was mad, they say?"

"Mad? Yes, indeed; as mad as ever a man was in his life."

The subject of the conversation of the two speakers was a strange affair that had happened the previous night, in which a respectable gentleman had nearly lost his life, the fright occasioned him having turned his hair from jet black to snow white.

The night before, as Mr. Barron, the owner of an elegant mansion on the outskirts of the town, was seated in his library, which was on the ground floor, and opened upon a broad piazza by means of glass doors, or more properly windows, he heard a noise outside.

In another moment the window was pushed aside, and a man entered, having on a long dressing-gown reaching nearly to his feet.

He was bearded, and had a high, full forehead; his complexion was sallow, and his face was deeply furrowed; but the most striking thing about him was his eyes.

These were black and gleamed like living coals, and being set near together, made his gaze most intense and direct.

It was quite late, every one in the house having long since retired; and as Barron was not naturally a strong man he felt somewhat alarmed at the presence of his nocturnal visitor, who, to tell the truth, did not seem to be the sort of man that one would care to be alone with at the dead of night in a lonely house.

"This is Mr. Barron, I believe," said the strange man, "the great literary genius?"

"I am engaged in literary work," answered the other, simply.

"And I have been sent to examine the condition of your brain. I am Dr. Night-Owl. Queer name, is it not?"

"Yes, rather singular."

"They call me so because I work only at night. I know more than—can do more. The occult sciences are then revealed to me, and I have discovered things hitherto unknown to medicine."

"Indeed!" answered Barron, scarcely knowing how to get rid of his visitor, and not being sure whether he meant violence or not.

One thing he felt sure of.

The man was insane, but whether dangerous or not was hard to determine.

"I have discovered a means by which a man's head can be removed from his body, the delicate

organs be given a thorough overhauling, and then the head be replaced. It's a wonderful discovery, and after it has been done three or four times, there need be no fear of a man's dying."

"Possible?"

"Certainly," answered the man, sitting down in front of Barron and upon the same side of the table. "Listen."

He fixed those glittering eyes upon his host, and the poor man felt scarcely able to move, and then, with one finger raised to about the height of his nose, proceeded to argue the case.

"Listen to me before I proceed to relieve you of your troubles," said the man. "Your head bothers you, your eyes become tired and your temples throb. You think all this comes from overwork. So it does, partly, but more because you want your head cleared, taken off, treated by my secret process, after which you will feel better."

What could the man intend to do?

"The head is the great seat of power," he continued. "Everything depends upon the head, the life, the will, the soul, the strength of man all comes from the head; some say that it is the heart that sets everything in motion, but that is fallacious; it is the head."

The man was certainly crazy, but that did not alarm Barron so much as did that other thought. There were harmless lunatics and there were dangerous ones.

"I am Dr. Night-Owl and live in the dark; my home is in the church vaults. I shun the daylight, but at night walk forth to do good to mankind. You need to have your head fixed, so that you can do better work, and I have come to perform the operation."

Barron sprang to his feet, and uttered one desperate cry for help, which rang all through the house.

Before he could cry out a second time, the madman seized him in his strong grasp, and fixing his terrible gaze upon his intended victim, actually charmed him into silence.

Then, binding him securely to the chair he sat in, and gagging him to prevent any further outcry, the maniac threw off his long dressing-gown, and rolling up his shirt sleeves, produced a sharp knife from about his person, and began rubbing the edge upon his thumb to test its keenness.

Then he advanced with that terrible weapon in his hand, and the man in the chair shuddered and turned pale, the big drops of moisture standing out upon his forehead.

He fainted dead away after that, and knew no more until he found himself in bed with the physicians bending over him.

Some inmates of the house had surprised the madman just as he was about to operate on the man in the chair.

He disappeared in the darkness, and no one fol-



lowed him, the poor man in the chair claiming all their attention.

His hair was found to have turned white in an instant, and his nerves were so unstrung that for hours his life was despaired of.

By morning the man was very much improved, and wrote out a brief account of the scene of the previous night, being unable to speak.

From this the officers obtained some clue to the maniac's identity, and recognized him as a former physician of the town who had mysteriously disappeared some months previous and had not been seen since.

The man had said that he dwelt in darkness, made his abode in the church vaults, and never ventured forth except at night. The place to seek for him, then, was in the church vaults.

There were several churches in the town, but only two or three that had vaults beneath them.

The search, therefore, was narrowed down to these two or three.

In one of these the vaults were so small and so clogged up with rubbish that it would have been impossible for a rat to have found a hiding-place, much less a man. Then the second place was visited.

It was dark, damp, and unwholesome; the dust lay inches deep upon the floor, and the rough beams and the stones were cold and clammy to the touch.

The man was not to be found, nor was there any indication that any human being had been in the place for years.

"I remember now," said the sexton, "that my man said to me several times lately that he had heard strange noises here, and that he could not account for them, not believing in the supernatural."

"Let us search further," said the officer. "I am convinced that we shall find the fellow here."

The old sexton suddenly remembered a small arched enclosure, shut in by a wooden door, which had long ago been used for storing coal, but had been disused for many years on account of its distance, the furnaces having been taken out of the vaults and removed to the basement of the church.

To this place he therefore led the way, with trembling steps, expecting every moment to hear the shrill laugh of a maniac sounding in his ears and to feel the icy fingers clutching his throat.

As he reached the closed door leading to the smaller vault the sexton pulled aside the heavy door, which creaked and groaned upon its hinges, causing both men to shudder, and throwing it wide open cast the light of his lantern into the enclosure. A rustling noise was heard, and then a harsh voice, after which something seemed to arise, out of which peered the gleaming eyes of a human being.

Then in the round patch of light made by the lantern on the rear wall of the narrow space, the explorers saw a man, in his shirt-sleeves and partly covered by an old blanket, sitting half up, and peering out at them from beneath his beetling brows.

He rested his weight upon one hand, and with the other upon his knee, which was upon a level with his breast, stared stupidly at them, the light seeming to dazzle him.

"It is the man himself," muttered the officer.

"What do you want?" growled the man, angrily. "Why do you bring a light to Dr. Night-Owl? I hate the light—I shun it, but I love the darkness. Go away with the light."

"We want to consult you, most learned physician," said the officer, who was a man of considerable tact. "We wish to have your assistance in restoring a poor man to reason."

"Ha, ha! the world at last is awakening to the importance of my wonderful discovery. Oho! fame and fortune shall now be mine! I knew it—I knew it; and yet men called me idiot, fool, dotard, when I advanced my theory."

"The whole town is waiting for you to have their heads cleaned out and reason restored," continued the officer. "Do not keep them waiting when you can relieve them so readily."

"I must have a hundred dollars for every case, before I stir a peg."

"Ha, ha! that does not sound like the speech of a madman," muttered the sexton. "That's an uncommonly wise remark."

"You shall have two hundred, only come with us at once," said the officer.

"It is not night yet. I will not stir until the sun has gone down."

"Most worthy physician, the sun has already hid his face for very shame at the brightness of your fame, and you will find all as dark as you could wish."

"Say you so? Ha, ha! then I will go with you," and the insane man stepped out upon the floor dragging his blanket after him.

In an instant the officer had a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists, while the sexton threw the blanket over his head, and drew it tightly around him.

The man struggled wildly, and tried to escape, but the two determined men hurried him quickly from the vaults and out into the air, where additional help was procured.

Dr. Night-Owl was most securely bound, though he made his teeth meet in one man's hand when the blanket was removed, and was carried to the asylum, where he was pronounced a maniac of the most dangerous type.

He remained in the asylum for some time, and wrote many treatises upon his wonderful discovery, but seemed annoyed at not being able to make a practical demonstration of his theories.

At last, one day, after having been particularly violent, complaining that his head needed renovation, he secured a knife, by some means unknown to us, and cut his own throat, and when we found him he was lying stone dead, as senseless as any of his wonderful theories.



## FROM ALL POINTS

### MILLIONAIRE MAY LOSE AN EYE.

A special to the Daily News, Chicago, from New Orleans says that Joseph Leiter, millionaire of Chicago, is threatened with the loss of one eye.

Leiter, according to a hunting party which had been at Leiter's hunting lodge, was hit in the eye by a reed as he sat in a dugout waiting for game. He is a brother of the late Lady Curzon.

### SUNLIGHT BLINDS YOUTH.

A flash of sunlight caused L. E. Wood of Newton, Kan., to lose his eyesight the other day.

Wood was walking along slowly when one of his fraternity brothers called to him from an upper story in the college of the Sigma Nu chapter house. Wood threw up his head suddenly. The brilliant reflection of the sun on some freshly painted wood-work blinded him. He was taken to his home in Newton.

Physicians who attended him declare that the sudden strain on the optic nerve caused a paralysis that may become permanent.

### BUILD NESTS UNDER FIRE.

Birds build nests in European forests while trees are being shelled during the artillery engagements, according to Dr. Arthur A. Allan, head of the department devoted to bird study at Cornell University, who spoke at the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in Philadelphia, Pa., recently.

He said a doctor with an ambulance corps in France counted 35 species of birds that had built nests in ruins of buildings and trenches abandoned by inhabitants and soldiers.

"Artillery fire that sweeps away entire sections of woods fails to disturb the birds which happen to be building there," Dr. Allan said. "The observer was able to see a number of these birds building nests under fire. The tree in which one of the birds was making a nest was entirely swept away by a shell, but a bird on a neighboring tree kept right on building."

### JUDGE'S AUTO KILLED WILDCAT.

Municipal Judge A. C. Backus, his wife and four children narrowly escaped with their lives when a wildcat jumped at the automobile in which they were touring through the State near Athens, Wis. The animal struck the front left tire so hard that its skull was fractured, and it fell backward dead on the road.

"I was driving toward Athens when I noticed a dark object on the left of the road," said Judge Backus. "At first I thought it was a large dog. When I saw that it was a cat and too large for a tame cat I put on speed. The cat jumped straight

for the car and I turned the wheel so that the cat struck it. Its skull must have been fractured. At the time I had no means of defense. It was a lucky thing that the cat was in front of the car instead of at the side, or it could have jumped into the machine."

Judge Backus took the dead animal from Athens to Marshfield, where he had it mounted. It weighed between forty and fifty pounds, and is of a grayish brown color. It will be presented to the Milwaukee Press Club.

### ALARM CLOCK ROOSTER.

W. D. King, of Dalton, Ga., has a rooster which, in itself, is nothing out of the ordinary; but then the rooster is. The bird has the alarm clock beaten, and he has the right to crow over it.

This rooster each morning on week-days takes his stand promptly at six o'clock beneath a window on the southwest corner of the house and begins to crow. On Sunday mornings he lets the family sleep thirty minutes later, as he doesn't appear Sundays until six-thirty.

His promptness is marvelous, for he is never a minute too soon or a minute too late. He doesn't have to be wound up at night, and he uses the hen roost, so he has the advantage over the alarm clock in that he doesn't hang around and tick loudly throughout the night. And he crows until some one comes to the window and heaves a stick at his head, so there is no danger of the alarm failing to wake the household.

### PLAN EXPEDITION TO FRENCH CONGO.

Plans were made public recently for what experts representing the Smithsonian Institute declare will be the most important scientific expedition ever launched from this country to the French Congo. Professor R. L. Garner and F. Aschmeier, who form the advance guard of the expedition, will sail with several tons of supplies, preparatory to an eighteen months' sojourn in the Congo.

They will be followed in March by Alfred M. Collins of Philadelphia, and Professor Charles Welling-ton Furlong of Boston. The object of the expedition is to obtain zoological specimens for the Smithsonian Institute and to make ethnological collections.

Mr. Collins is a big game hunter and explorer. Mr. Aschmeier for five years past has been associated with the Smithsonian Institute as a taxidermist and naturalist. Professor Furlong, who is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and an explorer, writer and painter, previously has been in Africa. Professor Garner also has been in Africa, having lived among the natives in the French Congo and learned their language.



## INTERESTING ARTICLES

### ALCOHOL KILLS THREE CONVICTS.

Three prisoners in the Illinois State Penitentiary are dead, three more are expected to die and three others are ill as the result of drinking wood alcohol which they extracted from shellac.

The men were employed in the shoe shop, where shellac is used. They brought the alcohol to the surface by adding salt to the shellac. It is believed they consumed two quarts of the poison. One man, when told that he was dying, confessed what they had done.

### WILDCAT TOOK MEAT.

Hearing a commotion in the yard the other night, members of the family of B. A. Ritchey, a farmer at Three Culverts, Pa., discovered a large wildcat making off with a section of a hog that had been hanging on a tree.

Thanksgiving night while the butchering party was at dinner, the wildcat dragged two shoulders of meat off a cooling board.

Persons living in the vicinity stay home nights, and securely fasten their hog pens and chicken coops, through fear of the animal.

### FRANCE ENROLLING WOMEN.

A woman's committee, presided over by Mme. Emile Boutrols, wife of the celebrated philosopher, has been organized to enroll women volunteers in the service of the country. It is appealing to all women to inscribe their names, with a statement of their aptitudes, and the time they will be able to devote to work in different categories when their services may be needed.

Enrolling offices will be opened soon and a comprehensive effort will be made to enlist all the women of France in the service of the nation.

### VETERAN DUG OWN GRAVE.

Dana B. Watson, aged eighty-four, a Lynn, Mass., Civil War veteran, has been buried in the grave he dug for himself a few days ago in his family lot in the cemetery of this town. He felt himself failing health about two weeks ago and came here to prepare his grave. It took him three days to complete the grave and line it with cement. Then he returned to Lynn after covering the grave with a wooden cover to keep out the rain. A week ago he told his friends in the Grand Army Hall in Lynn that he had his grave all ready and that he expected to live but a short while longer. He returned to his lodging house and died later of heart disease. The body was shipped here and has been buried according to the veteran's wishes.

### WILDCAT SEIZES TRAIN.

When a wildcat attacked a Western Maryland freight train in the mountains near Leno, W. Va., the crew, after giving battle for a few minutes, fled, leaving the animal in charge of the train.

The wildcat leaped upon the tender of the engine from a mountain slope and attacked Carl M. Austin, a flagman, leaping upon his back and ripping a sleeve from his coat.

Austin, who was shoveling coal in the tender, hit the beast with his shovel. The animal returned to the attack, and when Austin saw that the rest of the train crew had deserted him so, too, he fled. Later the crew returned and found that the wildcat had disappeared.

### UNEARTHED OLD INDIAN TOWN.

Prof. W. B. Nickerson, of Epworth, Ia., who has been making extensive excavations on the site of an old Indian village near Canby, Minn., and in some Indian mounds in the vicinity, has just completed his work for the Minnesota Historical Society.

Prof. Nickerson found that the Indian village was situated on the bluff overlooking the Minnesota River valley some 500 years ago and has unearthed much pottery, weapons, household tools and bones.

He is of the opinion that the Kaudian Indians may have inhabited the locality, which might account for many evidences of some degree of civilization, as these Indians were lighter in color than others and are believed to have had some white blood in their veins.

### WILL RUN BIGGEST HOTEL.

E. M. Statler, president of the Hotels Statler Company, is coming to New York to operate the largest hotel in the world, the new Hotel Pennsylvania, which is being erected on the east side of Seventh avenue from Thirty-second to Thirty-third street, directly opposite the Pennsylvania Station, New York. Franklin J. Matchette, lessee of the property, announced that Mr. Statler has purchased a controlling interest in the lease. Mr. Statler conducts hotels in Buffalo, Cleveland and Detroit and has a new structure going up in St. Louis. Mr. Matchette will keep a financial interest in the Pennsylvania.

Plans for the erection of the first section of the hotel have been changed to include a greater number of rooms than at first intended. The hotel is to be divided into four great wings, three of which will be put up at this time, giving a total capacity of 2,200 rooms, or 200 more than in any hotel in existence.



### FUNNY KISSING GAME.

These cards, from No. 1 to No. 16, run in rotation, but must be mixed and dealt, a white one for a boy and a red one for a girl. They are then read alternately, and the questions and answers make funny combinations. The right lady is rewarded with a kiss. A very funny game. Price, five cents a pack by mail.  
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### GAME OF AGE CARDS.

With these cards you can tell the age of any person, know how much money he has in his pocket, and do many other wonderful stunts. No previous knowledge necessary. The cards do the trick for you. The best magic cards out. Price, five cents a pack by mail.  
Wolf Novelty Co., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### GAME OF GOLD HUNTERS.

The game consists of matching cards. There is an odd card. The unlucky one holding it must ride the rest of the players on his back around the room or sidewalk. Very funny. Price, five cents a pack by mail.  
Wolf Novelty Co., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### SNAPPER CIGAR.

The real thing for the cigar grafter. If you smoke you must have met him. He sees a few choice cigars in your pocket and makes no bones about asking you for one. You are all prepared for him this time. How? Take one of these cigar snappers (which is so much like a real cigar you are able to smoke it yourself by mistake). Bend the spring back towards the lighted end, and as you offer the cigar let go the spring and the victim gets a sharp, stinging snap on the fingers. A sure cure for grafters. Price, by mail, ten cents each, or, three for 25c.  
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

### FORTUNE TELLING CARDS.

The most comical fortune telling cards ever issued. Every one a joke that will arouse screams of laughter. They are shuffled, and one is drawn—red for ladies, white for gentlemen. On the drawn card is a mirth-provoking picture, and a few words revealing your fortune. Price, five cents a pack by mail.  
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### NAIL PUZZLE.



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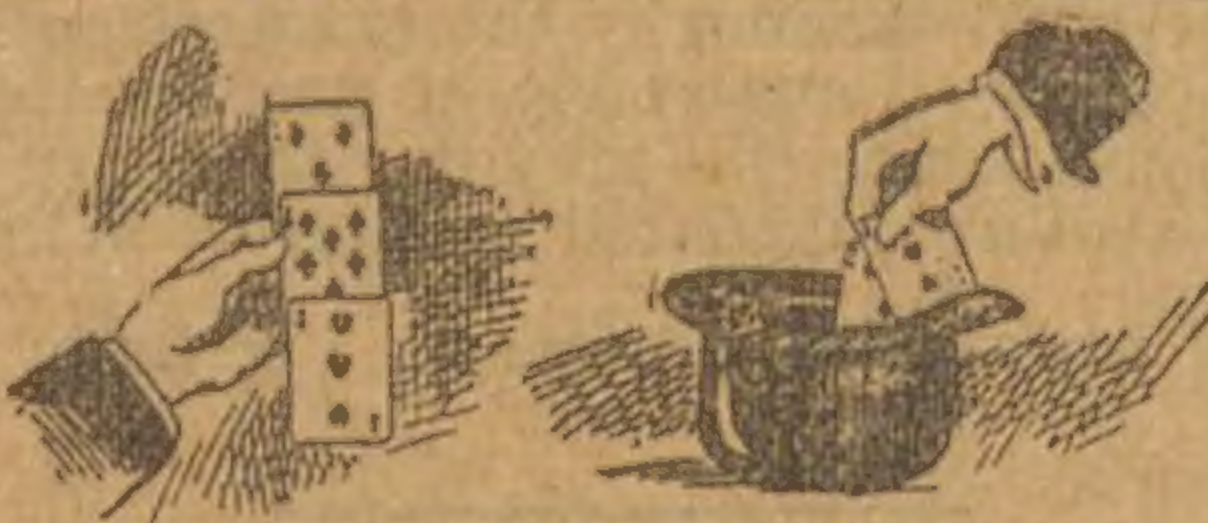
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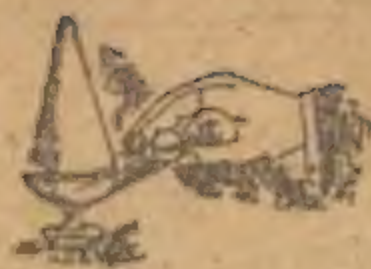
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 576 Making a Record; or, The Luck of a Working Boy.  
 577 A Fight for Money; or, From School to Wall Street.  
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